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### Cover Picture :

Detail from an embroidered frieze from Saurashtra, Gujarat.  
(Courtesy : Shreyas Folk Museum, Ahmedabad.)

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## Some Evidence of Dance in Pagan

Kapila Vatsyayan

In an article on the Dance Sculptures of Lara-Djonggrang (Prambanan)<sup>1</sup>, we had made a passing reference to two types of dancing figures from Burma. The first was a group of five bronze figures found in the Payama Pagoda of Srikshetra (ninth century) and the other, a painting of a dancer from the Pathothamya (also spelt as Pahto-thamya) temple (eleventh century).

In addition to the evidence found in Srikshetra and in Pathothamya, there are examples from many other sites in Burma (specially Pagan) which speak of a flourishing tradition of music and dance. These examples of bronze, terracotta figures, wood carvings and wall painting clearly reflect an unmistakable affinity of approach towards movement articulation patterns within the geographical region comprising India, Sri Lanka and Burma. These are also allied to the prolific evidence of the dance found in Champa, Angkor and Prambanan and the sites of the Lopburi period in Thailand.

In the article referred to above a comparative study was attempted of two categories of movement, cadences (*karana*-s) identified as the *ghurnita*, *valita* and the *urdhvajanu* of the *Natyashastra* system. In this paper we propose to focus our attention on the Burmese examples in relation to examples in other parts of contemporary Asia, more specifically India and Sri Lanka.

The example in bronze of the group of musicians and dancers from Srikshetra referred to above is important from many points of view. Scholars have spoken of these most spectacular finds of bronzes as evidence in the plastic arts to support the description of a visit by a Pyu mission (including a music and dance troupe) in the Chinese annals (802 A.D.). A close look at these small figurines (all only 4½" in height) reveals quite clearly that, in the manner of their treatment of mass, volume, the musical instruments and the stance of the dancer (the fourth figure from left), they are closer to the 'Indian type' (used here only for the sake of convenience) rather than to the 'Chinese' models. A very different class of musical instruments and movement patterns emerges in the post-fourteenth and fifteenth century paintings of Burma and for these we do not find Indian parallels. In this early period, roughly from the ninth to the twelfth century, there are many examples of music and dance (in both sculpture and painting) which convince us of an allied tradition of music and dance in many parts of Asia, extending from India to Champa, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Burma, but excluding China, Japan and Korea. The Srikshetra are perhaps the earliest examples in bronze of this pan-Asian or South-East Asian type of movement pattern. This finding supports, in part though not fully, the conclusions reached by art historians in the context of the stylistic features of the stone and bronze sculptures and paintings of Pagan.<sup>2</sup> The Srikshetra group of five is distinctly a music and dance ensemble where the musicians dance along with the dancer. The

last figure, identified as the dwarf by Aung Thaw<sup>3</sup>, is obviously the counterpart of the *vidushaka* or the *gana* figures found from the earliest times in many scenes relating to music and dance in India. A child, dwarf or *vidushaka* often accompanies the ensemble. In the Bharhut ensemble<sup>4</sup> of musicians and dancers the child figure is given great prominence. The Srikshetra group comprises a flutist, a drummer, and a cymbal player (or a *tala* keeper). These are the indispensable accompanists in most music and dance scenes found in the Indian sub-continent. Of great interest amongst these is the drummer. His animated pose can be easily identified as a *svastika chari* position in an *abhanga*: he plays the drum by crossing his arms. The crossing of the arms to play on the drum is a common feature of virtuosity among drummers and it can be witnessed in many dance performances in different parts of India. The drum, however, cannot be called a simple mridanga or a madala: its shape makes us believe that this is a percussion instrument akin to the ghumara of the Orissan variety, where only one end is covered by animal hide. The symmetrical cylindrical barrel-type of drum is seen in other examples of Burma, of a slightly later period but not in the present example. May we suggest that this is a distant precursor of the Burmese Ozi? The flutist's pose is in a clear *abhanga*, which with a deeper inflexion of the knees would have become a stylised *tribhanga*. The deflection of the hip, the counter-movement of the torso and the bend of the neck, along with the diagonal of the *hasta*-s (in *ardhamushti*) are clearly Indian features of the sixth and seventh centuries. What is true of the drummer and the flutist is also true of the cymbal player, who performs an important role. He faces the instrumentalists and is obviously directing them. The pose of the dancer we have already identified as one belonging to the *ghurnita* and *valita* group with an *ardhamandali*. One foot is in an out-turned *samapada*, the other in

*kunchita*, and the arms are in *uromandala*. This bronze figure is perhaps one of the first metal images which captures a moment of dance perfectly. All the Indian examples of dance figures in bronze belong to a later period.

After the Chinese had sacked a Pyu capital, Srikshetra began to decline by the ninth century. It was only after the Pyus gradually merged with the Burmese that Pagan emerged as the capital of unified Burma in the eleventh century. After Srikshetra the three most important sites besides others (from the point of view of music and dance) are from Pagan, namely the Pathothamya, the Shwezigon Pagoda (wooden door-frames), the Abeyadana temple tondoes of deities and the Abeyadana paintings of musicians and dancers. A few Nanda plaques are also of some relevance for a study of the delineation of movement patterns. Besides there are some dance scenes in the Kabyaukki, the Nagayon and the Myinpagu temples.

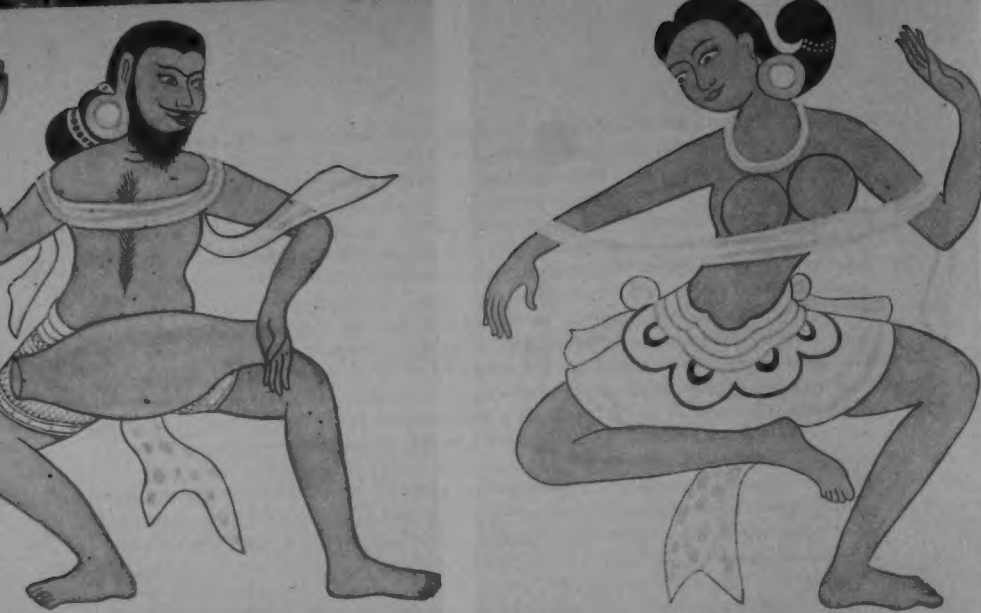
Amongst these, the reliefs on the wooden door-frames of the Shwezigon Pagoda constitute one category. The paintings of the Pathothamya and the Abeyadana represent a different but allied tradition, and constitute a second group.

The Pathothamya is ascribed by some scholars to the tenth and by others to the reign of Kyanzittha, on account of the old Mon writing and the fact that the content of the paintings is largely based on the Sinhalese Tipataka. After taking various arguments into account, Luce suggests a date of 1080 A.D. for this important site.<sup>5</sup> Aung Thaw agrees with this date and places it immediately before Kyanzittha (1084-1112 A.D.). Dr. Ray, however, believes that it belongs to the tenth century.

The temple, as is well-known, stands facing east inside Pagan city near the south wall on the west side of Nat-hlaunggyaung. On the outer wall of the northern corridor is a scene relating to Gautama's tonsure. Close to it, on the south wall of the west roof shrine is a painting of two ministers in an attitude of prayer. Similar paintings of ministers in a kneeling position are seen in the east wall of the south roof shrine, and the west wall on the same south roof shrine. On the west wall are two paintings, one of a drummer and the other of a female dancer. The gloss in Mon which corresponds to these paintings reads roughly thus, "Gotama sees the nautches who..."<sup>6</sup> Luce, in his impressively documented study, observes, "The lowest panels, showing the life of the Buddha impress me as rich and deep in colour, and sometimes grand in design: but distant and dim and vague until the work of fixing and cleaning is accomplished. Such suspended judgment applies particularly to Pathothamya, which set the standard in painting for the later temples".<sup>7</sup>

While the paintings of the ministers is an attitude of prayer and those which illustrate the Kaladevi Twin Miracle<sup>8</sup> are interesting and significant for a comparative study of the stylistic features of mural painting in India and Burma, our concern here is with the two figures—one of a dancer and the other of a drummer. In the article on the Prambanan sculptures<sup>9</sup> we had identified the female dancer's pose as being in the popular *urdhvajenu* with





1

1(a)

a *dola* or *lata hasta* of the *Natyashastra* tradition. The stance of the drummer (Fig. 1), the shape and size of his drum, and the entire countenance is interesting from another point of view. In sharp contrast to the small almost pot-bellied drum of the Sriksheṭra bronze figure, here is a fully developed mridanga, like the one which we began to encounter in Indian sculpture (but not Indian painting) of the ninth and tenth centuries. It is a variety of *khol* which has always been popular in Eastern India, but is unlike the cylindrical *pakhavaja*-type of drum which we find in the Prambanan sculptures.<sup>10</sup> Although there are a few specimens of this type of drum in early Indian sculpture, its popularity can be witnessed after the ninth century. In most early examples, there is a pair of vertical drums played largely by women. The horizontal drums are not tapering on either side.<sup>11</sup> The stance of the drummer is even more important, because this is a variation without doubt of the *mandala sthana* of the *Natyashastra* system. The *mandala sthana* is defined by Bharata as an initial position where the feet are placed obliquely (outwards and sideways) and there is a four *tala* distance between the two feet. The knees should be bent in *kshipta* and the level should be low.<sup>12</sup> The balancing of the arms, the gestures of the hands are common features of numerous dance styles which are prevalent all over South-East Asia. Although the tradition of a drummer, dancing along with the dancer has been lost to Javanese, Balinese, Cambodian and most classical styles in India, it continues in Sinhalese dancing and in some forms of Indian dancing. In Kathakali, the *madala* is played standing but the drummer does not dance along with the dancer. In the Assamiya *Sattria* dancing, the tradition continues and, of course, there is the whole world of *pung* playing in Manipuri. The dancer-drummer of Pathothamya has many distinctive features which have close affinities with both Indian and Sinhalese figures of the

contemporary period. Nevertheless the square erect position of the torso, the near three-fourth face without a pointed nose or pinched cheeks, and the coiffure recall sculptures in Sri Lanka, but have little in common with the stylistic features of the paintings of the Jaina school or what has been termed as the Western Indian school. For Indian parallels one would have to look at the sculptural reliefs rather than examples of painting. We have not been able to locate a similar stance in any Early Bengal painting.

To the period of Kyanziththa belong the important monuments of Shwezigon Pagoda (possibly 1086 A.D.) with the carved wooden frames, the paintings of the Nagayon temple and the Abeyadana painting.

While the Shwezigon Pagoda presents very valuable evidence relating to music and dance in its wood carvings, the other two pagodas are full of murals on the life of the Buddha painted on the walls of the corridors. Kyanziththa built the Nagayon Pagoda (circa 1090 A.D.) It is known for its pinnacle which is shaped like a mitre and for its curvilinear roofs and square terraces. The outer walls of the shrine and the corridors are filled with stone sculptures depicting Buddha's life before attaining enlightenment. The inner walls of the corridor, with a fine plinth moulding, illustrate scenes from the life of the Buddha with glosses in Mon and Pali. In the low central band of the plinth, there are many figures of dancers, men and women and musicians comprising cymbal players, and many who play on a variety of drums. The dancers here are all in groups unlike those in the Pathothamya and the Abeyadana temples. All the paintings of the Nagayon temple<sup>13</sup> are characterised by overcrowding of figures, each falling upon the other; every inch of the painting surface is covered with a countless multitude of people. This is as true of the painting depicting the earthquake as it is of the magnificent painting illustrating Sonananda's battle scenes.<sup>14</sup> The dance scenes also reflect the same approach. The sense of movement in these scenes of battle and earthquake is, as it were, continued in the animated movements of the dancers, male and female. The scenes convey a powerful sense of drama, as opposed to dance proper. Scholars have considered this temple as a prototype of the Ananda temple (Nanda) and its thematic content follows the Sinhalese Theravada school. It is a pity that it is impossible to photograph these panels in their present condition. Nevertheless they are significant from many points of view. Judging from the stylistic features of these paintings it is obvious that although they are contemporaneous with the earliest layer of the Brihadishvara temple, the inner walls of the *garbhagraha* and the paintings of Elura of the later period (commonly termed as Jaina paintings), they have very little in common with their Indian counterparts. Neither the spatial division of the wall area nor the facial types are a direct imitation of Indian traditions. It is a family resemblance and no more.

The Abeyadana, a much smaller temple than the Nagayon, stands one hundred yards to the north-west of the latter. Both temples face north towards Pagan, and are at the top of the Myinpagan village, on rising ground. This temple is also ascribed to Kyanziththa although scholars now agree that it may possibly have been built by his chief queen.<sup>15</sup> It closely follows the plan of the Nagayon temple with sloping roofs and perforated windows.



Instead of the *shikhara* of the Nagayon it has a bell-shaped *stupa* above the terraces. Again, unlike the Nagayon, there are no niches for images of the Buddha. Instead, we encounter a large seated Buddha in the sanctum. Mural paintings fill the outer walls of the corridor as also the inner walls. While the outer walls illustrate scenes of the Bodhisattvas, the inner walls portray many Hindu deities like Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, etc. These deities of the west wall tondoes are seen on their respective *vahana*-s. Some of these are significant from the point of view of the 'flying motif' and to these we shall shortly return. First we should like to draw attention to the pairs of celestial musicians, *gandharva*-s and *apsarasa*-s. Several pairs are seen, each with an interesting musical instrument. They occupy the space above the tondoes on all three faces and on each side of the niche pediments. The height of these figures is about thirteen inches each and nearly fifteen such pairs have been listed.

The style of these flying musicians and dancers is vaguely reminiscent of similar scenes in Ajanta and Elura where, too, we have many examples of *gandharva*-s flying with clouds trailing behind them. Although the instruments they carry are not too easy to identify, we can see here a variety of gongs, drums, pipes, flutes, etc. and an Indian vina and a six-stringed harp.<sup>16</sup> The *vipanchi* vina is seen in early Indian sculpture and continues in Burma to this day but has been abandoned in India.<sup>17</sup> The lower limb position of many of these flying figures in Abeyadana is not clear, but the impression of flying is beautifully captured through the treatment of the torso, which is gracefully extended.<sup>18</sup>

More significant from our point of view are the tiny panels of musicians and dancers and drummers on the low band of the plinth moulding of the inner wall. They recall the musicians and dancers of the Nagayon temple. We have reproduced here five line drawings made by Mya Maung of the



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Archaeological Department, Burma, since the photographs do not show the full contour of the figures clearly.<sup>19</sup> There are two drummers (Figs. 2 and 3) both in a variation of the *mandala sthana*. One holds a huddukka type of drum (Fig. 2) and the other a mridanga type. A third is illustrated by Luce as Pl. 24(a). While the distance between the two feet of about five *tala*-s, suggesting an open position and a vigorous movement, is common to all these figures, there is an interesting variety in their stances. The drummers appear to be in a moment of dance, almost at a point of commencing a kinetic sequence. The painter is successful in conveying a feeling of dynamism through the suggestion of a partially extended leg; the other leg and foot carry the weight of the body. The relaxed extended torso reinforces this movement of the lower limbs and the tilt of the neck adds to its dynamic quality. All drummers belong to a single group and are close parallels of the Pathothamya Pagoda. The cymbal player and the conch or horn blowers constitute another group. The cymbal (or *manjira*) player (Fig. 4) is in an *ardhamandali* (akin to the demi-plie of western ballet); although it recalls to mind Indian examples there is a marked difference on account of the space between the two feet. The closest Indian parallels again come from sculpture rather than painting. The conch (or the horn) blower (Fig. 5) is in a class by himself for here the distance between the two feet is the greatest, and had his right leg been fully extended, he would have achieved the *alidha sthana* perfectly. A female dancer (Fig. 6) holds yet another musical instrument, a kind of triangle. She, too, is in an absolute open low *mandala sthana* verging on the *alidha*. An examination of many other figures of the Abeyadana group reveals that the *urdhvajanu* does not appear to be popular with the artists of this pagoda. It is obvious from closely studying these examples that while there is a distinct continuity between the Pathothamya figures and those of the Abeyadana, there are some marked differences. The groups of musicians and dancers of the two pagodas have now to be compared with some significant examples from Sri Lanka, as there are no exact parallels in India of the contemporary period. There are many reliefs of musicians and dancers from Yapahuwa, Ganegoda and Embakke (belonging to the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries). A close parallel of the *mandala sthana* is seen in a frieze of a dancers now in the Colombo Museum and in two other magnificent examples from



Ganegoda.<sup>20</sup> A perfect example of the *mandala sthana* scene is in a carving from Embekke. Considered together, it would appear that many dance styles in the wide area (i.e. India, Sri Lanka and Burma) depended on their kinetic vocabulary on this important *sthana* of the *Natyashastra* system.

The examples from Pathothamya and Abeyadana are also significant for a comparative study of painting styles. While the bearded type, the scantily dressed dancers (male and female) exhibit an unmistakable affinity of approach towards a dance vocabulary, the Burmese painting technique here cannot be identified as having stylistic features which can be considered as counterparts of the Jaina or Western Indian schools of Indian painting (all are incidentally later in time than the Pagan examples). There are no extended eyes or further eyes and no profiles, so characteristic of early miniature painting commonly called Western Indian. Indeed it would also be difficult to identify many stylistic features which recall the later paintings of the Jaina school in Elura. This is borne out by a careful scrutiny of the dancer and musician panels, as well as the stylistic features of the celestial *gandharva*-s and *apsarasa*-s. Only vaguely are the figures of the dancers reminiscent of some Chola paintings of Tanjore. Some facial types recall those seen in Brihadishvara in the context of the story of Saint Sundara.

The facial features, the manner of drawing the deities on *vahana*-s placed in circular tondoes in contrast exhibit traits which link them with Indian paintings of a slightly later period. We venture to suggest that here affinities are closer to the early Eastern Indian paintings rather than the thirteenth-fourteenth century Western Indian paintings.<sup>21</sup> Even here the differences are as significant as the similarities and a second, a closer look is perhaps necessary before conclusive statements on a derived Burmese school can be made. All that can be said is that these are distinctive regional or national variations, within one large Asian family group.

For our purpose, we have to return to the 'flying motif' as one amongst many other motifs illustrative of this widespread Asian dialogue. In many scenes of this and other pagodas of Pagan are seen 'flying figures', the Buddha figure in arches, etc. In Pagan, as in India and other countries of Asia, this motif occurs repeatedly and in each case it incorporates the fundamental characteristics of a class of movement described by Bharata in the *Natyashastra* as the *vrshchika karana*. Although we have dealt with the subject elsewhere<sup>22</sup> in the context of Asian sculpture and Indian reliefs, here we include a few more examples from the mural paintings of Pagan to further support our argument about minor motifs being significant indicators of mobility patterns in Asia.

A beautiful example of this motif may be seen in Abeyadana on the outer walls of the corridor, where a pair of such flying musicians and dancers adorns the Buddha on either side (Fig. 7). The clouds, the tendrils of the lotus, provide the frame for these floating figures. Amidst the many wavy patterns, the contours of flying figures are precisely executed in the *vrshchika kuttila karana* of the *Natyashastra* tradition. Notice in contrast the two kneeling figures, which are distinctive to Pagan in many ways. While the flying motif



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continues in India until the fifteenth-sixteenth century, it is discarded in South-East Asia in the thirteenth century. Although placed differently another important example is seen in Pagoda No. 698 (Fig. 8), this time in an architectural arch. The foliage is more elaborate and the space crowded with minute lines, but the figure of the flying *gandharva* emerges clear and unambiguous (Fig. 8). In the Tawyagyaung Pagoda of a slightly later (i.e. post-Kyanzittha) period the motif is repeated (Fig. 9). The *gandharva* plays on a musical instrument which is difficult to identify but the pose is significant. The frontal full-face treatment is also significant. However, there is another





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type of kneeling pose with both legs infolded which is frequently seen in the Pagan sculptures and paintings. This is insignificant or almost non-existent in Indian paintings of this period, both mural and miniature. It becomes increasingly popular in South-East Asia and in Japan, but goes into oblivion in post-twelfth century Indian painting. It is this kneeling pattern with knees closed in front which links some important movements of Manipuri and Burmese dancing of a much later period. The Kondawgyi temple (twelfth-thirteenth century, Fig. 10) provides us a typical example. The kneeling position is characteristic of the manner in which musicians sit in the South-East Asian and Japanese orchestra. This is in contrast to sitting *asana*-s found in Indian painting or seen today in traditional Indian concerts. These differences in sitting modes are so obvious that few art historians or others have cared to comment on them. However when one considers the cultural affinities and distinctiveness of several countries in Asia, these subtle differences are significant indicators of deeper concerns and attitudes. An interesting example is seen in Pagoda 163 (Fig. 11) where both positions are used. By the fifteenth-sixteenth century only the kneeling position continues and the flying motif disappears. We find a significant example of this posture in a stone figure of a woman in Htukkan-thein Mrohaung (Fig. 12) belonging to the fifteenth-sixteenth century. The monument is otherwise known for its sculptures which are unlike any others found in Burma.<sup>23</sup>

From the paintings of the Pathothamy and the Abeyadana we have to return now to the examples, some elegant and others somewhat gross, of the musicians and the dancers found in the carvings of the wooden door-frames of the Shwezigon Pagoda. Besides, there is one important dance scene amongst the Nanda terrace Mahanipata Jataka tablets. The Shwezigon belong to the eleventh century, the Nanda terrace plaques to the twelfth century.

The Shwezigon Pagoda has also been dated by scholars<sup>24</sup> to about 1086 A.D. and is attributed to Kyanzittha. The carved wooden door was found by Duroiselle<sup>25</sup> in the North *gandhakuti*: it is now in a *tazaung* on the east side of the south approach. Amongst these wooden frames are many significant sculptures, all supporting our argument that while there was an affinity of approach in dance movements in India, Sri Lanka and Burma in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it gradually gave place to a national distinctiveness from about the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries onwards. Continuities can be discerned in India, but radical changes take place in Burma after the fifteenth century.

Duroiselle give a vivid account of one of these figures.<sup>26</sup> "The middle piece consists of a half-naked figure dancing in an antique fashion. Here

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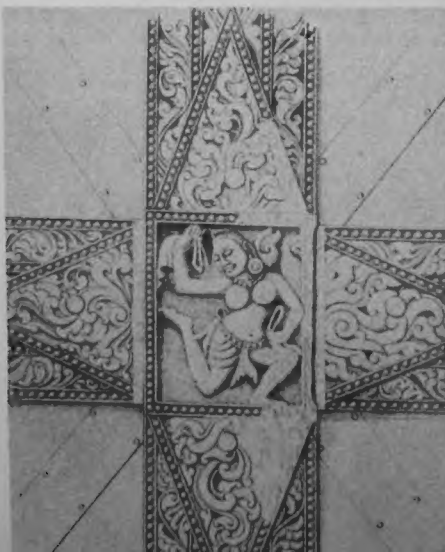




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although the right leg which is bent has been placed a little too high in the air, the whole pose is quite natural and artistic", (Fig. 18(a)). Duroiselle also notices "the figures of a man playing a clarionet, a man beating a drum and a woman dancing with gentle sway of her body". In the same report, he believes that these door-frames belong to the original pagoda and must be so dated. There are many figures in these door-frames which are of special interest to us. One of these (Fig. 13) is in a clear *ardhamandali*.<sup>27</sup> One foot is placed in *samapada* with toes pointing sideways and the other in *kunchita*. This is a precise delineation of the movements of the *ghurnita* and *valita* type of *karana*-s described by us in the context of the Prambanan sculptures.<sup>28</sup> Her

18(a)

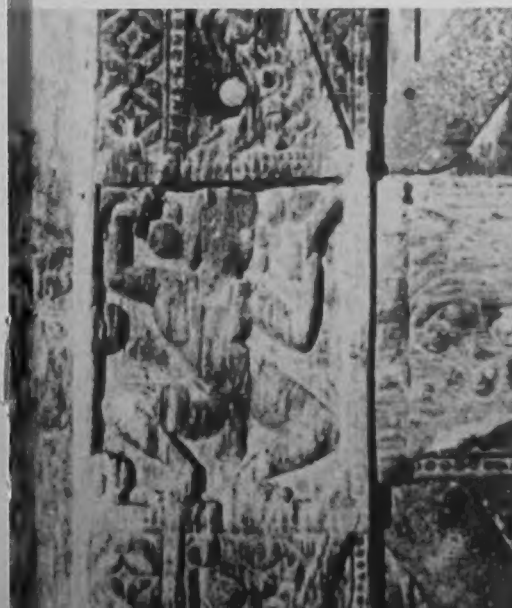


13

arm movements are in a characteristic flourish seen in many dance sculptures in India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia from the ninth century onwards.<sup>29</sup> The present figure<sup>30</sup> may well be representing a movement of the *kuditta mitta* type of presentday Bharatanatyam. In another (Fig. 14) both feet are in *kunchita* or perhaps even in *agratala sanchara* and the lower limbs are in *ardhamandali* with a clear *kshipta* movement of the knees. The dancer may also well be executing a *tai hat tai adavu* sequence of Bharatanatyam or what Bharata describes as *udghattita*. A third figure (Fig. 15) is depicted as if moving sideways and this we may identify as a *parshvagata* movement al-

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though it is not a very elegant example. A musician is seen playing a wind instrument in a movement which is very close to the *kunchita* movement.<sup>31</sup> This is often seen in Indian sculpture. Finally there are two others which are representations of the dynamic *vrshchika karana* movement. In one (Fig. 16) there is one infolded knee and the other leg is extended back. The calf is raised so that the foot is at shoulder level. One arm is in the position of the *uromandala hasta* and the other is in a movement of the *dola hasta* crossing the torso, thus making it an excellent example of the *kari hasta* position. The relief is a beautiful example of an arrested moment of the dance where the neck, the arm and the leg movements are harmoniously balanced through a series of diagonals. In the matter of its sculptural quality, it is a close second to all that we see in Indian stone relief of the period of Khajuraho in particular and of the somewhat earlier one in Aihole. Yet another figure is similar. It also follows the same principles of articulation of the limbs (Fig. 17) although it



17



18



19



19(a)

does not have an equal degree of dynamism, on account of an absence of a tilt of the head and the position of the arms. In another frieze we see a powerful movement of the *dola hasta* and an uplifted *urdhvajanu* with a perfect *ardhamandali* recalling Indian examples from Paharapur (Fig. 18). The extended torso, the contrary movement of the neck and the static *ardhamandali* of the lower limbs, give this relief a rare power. The drummers of these panels are all rather dull and formal in comparison. They are frontal figures with either an *ardhamandali* (Fig. 19) or a *mandala sthana* (Fig. 19a) and have none of the exuberance of the drummers of the Pathothamya or the Abeyadana painted figures.

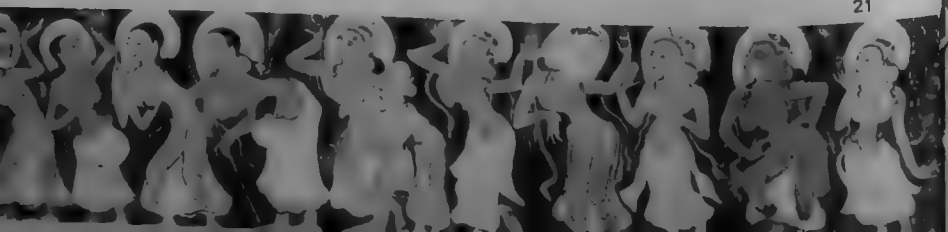
Finally we have to draw attention to the relief on the Nanda terraces of the Mahanipata Jataka belonging to the later part of Kyanzittha's reign (circa 1105 A.D.) where there is a chiselled depiction of the *urdhvajanu* movement with one foot in *kunchita* and a *kshipta* of the legs, and the other leg elevated in an *urdhvajanu*. This is perhaps the most sophisticated example of a dancer in the Indian style which we encounter in Pagan, and is perhaps the last (Fig. 20). The scene belongs to the Mahanipata Jataka and is seen in the second terrace from top on the west face between the south-west corner and the centre. It represents an episode from the Bhuridatta Jataka: the legend below has been translated by Luce, Cowell and others and reads as follows: "Bhuridatta keeps the precepts in the garden". Many plaques depict the story of the Boddhisattva in the Naga country.

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A comparison of these examples with those found in Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia leads us to conclude that notwithstanding regional distinctiveness, there was a pervasive dance style which was popular in many parts of Asia. It evolved by adopting two basic positions or *sthana*-s of the *Natyashastra* system, namely the *ardhamandali* (a close second to the *vaishnava sthana*) and the *mandala sthana*. From these two basic stances (or what we may call the first and second position, akin to the demi-plié and the grand-plié of the western classical ballet) developed many movements. Popular amongst the movements which evolved from the *ardhamandali* or the *vaishnava sthana* was the *ghurnita valita chatura*, etc. as one group, and the *apakranta*, *urdhvajanu*, and *parshvajanu* as a second group. The *mandala sthana* gave rise to a variety of movements, which are today recognized as the *chauka* in some Indian styles such as the Mayurbhanja Chhau and the Purulia Chhau (known as the *bhuja mura* in the latter) and seen as the basic stance of Kathakali and Ottanthal and Javanese dance styles and used in Odissi. In Sri Lanka the basic position of the *mandala sthana* continued in aspects of later Kandyan dancing but was given up in Burmese dancing of the post-fifteenth to sixteenth century. The *vrshchika karana* movements were equally popular: they continued to be incorporated in certain aspects of later Burmese dancing as is obvious from movements in the Burmese oil-lamp yain dances and some other Burmese forms but were not quite as popular in the Indian classical styles. The movement continued in India in forms in Chhau and in Thai dancing in the group called by the generic term *kinnari* movements. No examples of the *lalatatilaka* or other *vrshchika karana* are found in post-sixteenth century Indian painting. The *ardhamandali* and the *mandala sthana* also gradually gave place to a standing erect position in India as is evident in the late Rajasthani and Pahari schools. In Burma they were replaced by movement patterns of the late Ava school.

It is important to remember that what is true of the portrayal of certain movement patterns of dance does not necessarily hold good for the stylistic features of the paintings. Although our examples clearly bear out that there was a pan-Asian vocabulary of dance, these very examples tell us of a comparatively more autochthonous treatment of line and colour. It has perhaps been an oversimplification to conclude that Pagan painting styles of the early period (i.e. until Kyanzittha) were directly related to painting styles of contemporary India, particularly Western Indian painting.<sup>32</sup> The paintings of Pathothamya and Abeyadana are a category apart from those seen in Payathon-zu, Minnanthu Nandamannya, all belonging to the late twelfth, thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The pointed nose and the impression of an extended or further eye (with the important difference that there are no profiles here) begin in this period and appear to have a rather short life.



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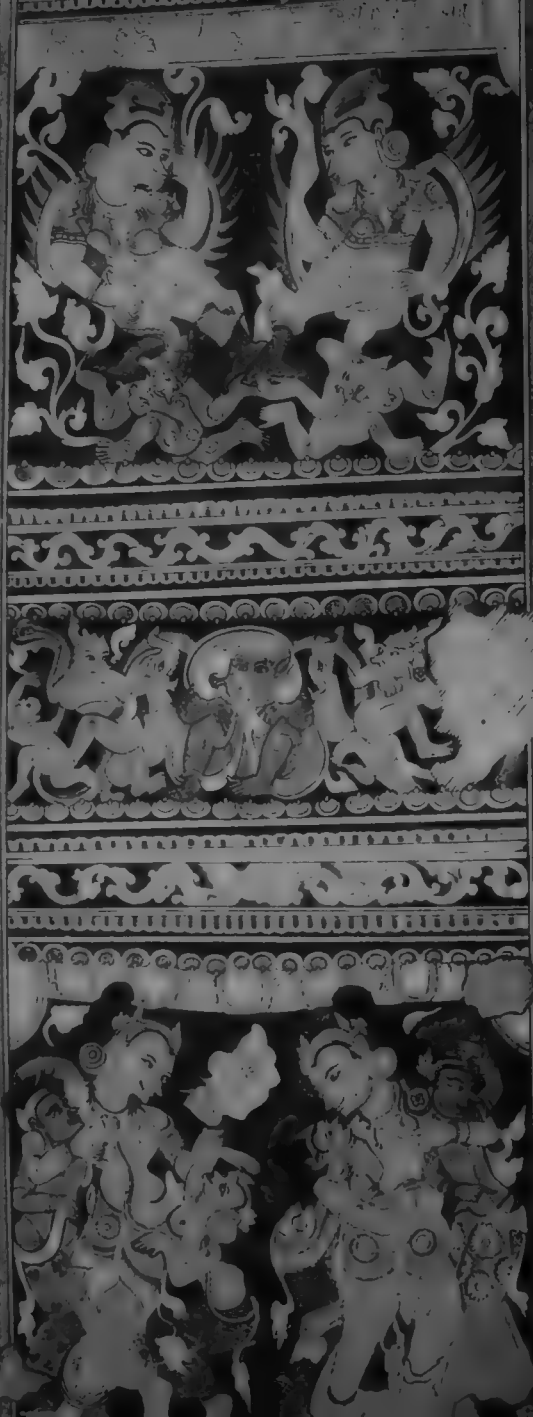


22

The procession of young and old women (Fig. 21) and two other scenes from Payathon-zu Pagan (Figs. 22 and 23) will make it clear that although the pointed nose, the squat faces, the near emergence of an extended eye recall Indian developments, the stances of the men and women, and the treatment of space is quite different from anything we encounter in India in the contemporary period. The crossing of feet in *svastika* and the *karihasta* diagonal position of the hands and arms is reminiscent of Indian models, but unmistakably Burmese in form and style. The framed picture approach is absent in the Nandamannya and is hardly explicitly evident in the examples of Payathon-zu Pagan. The crossing *karihasta* (Fig. 22) is unpopular in Indian miniature painting, as also the rather special bending of the knees in front. Scholars have been led to seek close affinities perhaps only on account of the treatment of the face, its outline, the pointed nose and the semblance of an extended eye in the Payathon-zu Minnanthu Pagan group of paintings.

While the exact identification of the stylistic details of the paintings is not our direct concern here, it assumes importance in the context of tracing the history of movement patterns in India, Burma and Sri Lanka in the post-fourteenth and fifteenth century period. It also throws a flood of light on the possibilities of achieving an individual style within a largely shared framework. Soon in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries appears the Ava school which discards these traits almost in entirety and adopts a totally different compositional pattern.

By the time of the Ava period, all the Indian, South-Asian characteristics recede into the background, and we begin to confront a style of painting which reflects an unmistakable radical departure from the early Pagan examples. The stances of the figures of the Pagan paintings give way to others which are far removed in ethos and style. Dr. Ray considers this as a gradual process of Burmanisation. The causes of these marked changes have to be sought in many socio-cultural developments in Burma. The consequential affinities with the visual arts of China, Korea and Japan are not too far to



seek. An investigation of the contours of these changes would be valuable, but obviously demands an independent study. Here we include one single example from the Sulamani Pagoda (Fig. 24) merely to bring home the contrast in the music and dance styles as reflected in Pagan and the Ava period. This is one amongst several examples which speak of the consolidation of a new movement. We propose to trace the history of its origin and development in a subsequent article.

Here we may conclude by reiterating our initial observation that the wood-carvings, plaques and paintings of Pagan constitute valuable source material for a study of the extensive popularity of the *Natyashastra* system of movement in practically all parts of Asia (particularly what is today termed South-Asia and South-East Asia) between the ninth and twelfth centuries. A related deduction pertains to the stylistic features of the Pagan murals which suggest re-examination. From the few examples we have included, it is clear that there is a gradual change from the painting styles of Patho-themya and the Abeyadana Pagodas to those found in the Minnanthu such as the Nandamannya, Payathon-zu. Although both these have some affinities with Indian murals and miniature paintings in point of time they precede in some cases the Indian schools to which they have often been compared. Thus Pagan painting, like Pagan architecture, has to be broken up into smaller units. Changes appear to take place here in quick succession. Finally by the time of the Ava period, there is the evolution of a Burmese painting style and dance system which has little in common with contemporary Indian miniature painting of the sixteenth to seventeenth century or the dance style of the same period.

*Note:* Material for this study was gathered during a trip to Burma. Besides the monuments, thousands of line-drawings and photographs from the collections of the Archaeological Survey of Burma were examined. Useful discussions were also held with Aung Thaw, U Thein Han and other Burmese scholars. The material demands further attention from Indian and Burmese scholars. I am deeply indebted to the Archaeological Survey of Burma for their help and assistance.



1. Vatsyayan, Kapila, 'The Dance Sculptures of Lara-Djonggrang (Prambanan). A Comparative Study'. *Quarterly Journal of the National Centre for the Performing Arts*. Vol. VI, No. 1, March, 1977, pages 1-14. Figs. 1-22. Henceforth abbreviated to *QJ* (NCPA) Vol. VI, No. 1. Figs. 7a and 21 of the article are Burmese examples.
2. Ray, N. R., 'The Pagan Paintings'. *Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. VI, 1938, pages 137-148.
3. Mazumdar, M. R., 'The Gujarati School of Painting and some newly discovered Vaishnava miniatures'. *JISOA*, Vol. X, 1942, pages 1-32.
4. Ray establishes three stages of Pagan painting. He believes that in the first stage it is only a component of Pala painting and that in the second and third stages the linear conception completely supersedes the plastic.
5. Thaw, Aung, *Historical Sites in Burma*, Ministry of Union Culture, Government of the Union of Burma, Sarpay Beikman Press, Rangoon, 1972, page 31. Henceforth abbreviated to Thaw, Aung, *HSB*.
6. Vatsyayan, Kapila, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*. Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, 1968. See Fig. 58 from Bharhut, and Figs. 64 and 66 from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. Henceforth abbreviated to Vatsyayan, K., *CIDLA*.
7. Luce, Gordon H., *Old Burma-Early Pagan*. Vols. I, II and III. Published by Artibus Asiae and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1969, Vol. I, page 303. Henceforth abbreviated to Luce, G., *OBEP*. Also see Thaw, Aung, *HSB*, page 48.
8. Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, page 305.
9. *Ibid*, page 309.
10. *Ibid*, Vol. III, Pls. 165 and 167.
11. *QJ* (NCPA) *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, No. 1, Fig. 21.
12. *Ibid*, Fig. 1.
13. Vatsyayan, K., *CIDLA*, *Op. cit.*, Figs. 56 and 67. In the latter both types are seen; compare the drums in Pls. 71 and 76 (*CIDLA*) where a pair of vertical drums is the norm. From Khajuraho onwards only a horizontal drum (of the *alingya* type) becomes popular. See Figs. 77, 78, and 79. The closest Indian example is the panel from the Survaya temple ceiling (Fig. 92 of *CIDLA*).
14. The different types of drums of the generic mridanga variety have been termed as pataha, karata, etc. as distinct from the huddukka type.
15. *Natyashastra*, Chapter XV, 64-65. (Man Mohan Ghosh's translation).
16. Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Pls. 204 and 206. Also see Ray, *Op. cit.*, where he believes that these are like Eastern Indian paintings.
17. *Ibid*, Vol. I, pages 311-312 and Report of the Archaeological Survey of Burma, 1904, page 28.
18. Thaw, Aung, *HSB*, *Op. cit.*, page 51.
19. Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, page 321. These deductions are based on a sixteenth century inscription. See Archaeological Survey of Burma Report 1915, page 42.
20. Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, page 326.
21. For examples of the vipenchai vine in Early Indian Sculpture, see Vatsyayan, K., *CIDLA*, *Op. cit.*, Figs. 61, 68 and 71.
22. Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Pl. 224. Although the lines are sharp, there is a terseness of execution. We cannot consider these as the counterparts of the later Elura flying figures where the lower limb positions are totally different. Dr. Ray again connects these also to Eastern Indian paintings.
23. See photographs of originals in Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Pl. 241(b).
24. Godekumbura, C. E., *Sinhalese Dance and Music*. Archaeological Department of Colombo. Pamphlet 7, Figs. 12, 13, 14 and 15. The last is from Embekke, fourteenth century.
25. Compare illustrations of these deities in Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Pls. 229-237 and Indian examples illustrated in Moti Chandra, *Studies in Early Indian Painting*, Pls. III, V, etc. In this respect we confirm Dr. Ray's findings regarding these paintings.
26. Vatsyayan, K., *CIDLA*, *Op. cit.*, Chapter II, pages 120-121 and Figs. 42 to 55 and Vatsyayan, K., *Vrishchika Karana*. *JISOA*, Vol. V (New Series), Vasudeva Saran Commemorative Number, Part II, 1972-73, pages 46-49.
27. Thaw, Aung, *HSB*, *Op. cit.*, page 119.
28. Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, page 267, Vol. III, Pls. 179-182.
29. Archaeological Survey of Burma, 1923 Report, pages 12-13 and Pl. III, Figs. 2, 3, etc.
30. Archaeological Survey of Burma Report 1923, page 12, Pl. III, Fig. 2. The description refers to our Fig. 18(a) and Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Pl. 179(a). The pose of the dancer is in a *kunchita karana* of the *vrishchika* variety.
31. Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Pl. 182(c).
32. Vatsyayan, K., *QJ* (NCPA), *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, No. 1.
33. For *rechete* and *uromandala hasta*-s see illustrations of article quoted above.
34. Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, Pl. 182.
35. *Ibid*, Vol. III, Pl. 182(a).
36. For other examples of dance figures see Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Plates 262 from the So Min Gyi glazed work, Figs. a to e. All the figures have an *ardhamandali* or are in a *mandala sthane*. Some hold drums of the kind seen in the Shwezigon Pagoda. Also see Pl. 327(b) for another scene of dance in the Nanda tablets. The legend reads, "Alambayana makes Bhuridatta dance" Luce, G., *OBEP*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, page 151. For the Bhuridatta Jataka see Cowell, Vol. VI, p. 98 and see *Epigraphia Birmanica* II, Part I, pp. 85-86, Part II, Pl. LV, 233.
37. Thaw, Aung, *HSB*, *Op. cit.*, pages 88-91, for note on painting where he speaks of a strong Western Indian influence and that of the Varendra School of Bengal and Nepal. See Ray, *Op. cit.*, where he unlike Thaw believes that the paintings of the Payathon-zu and Nandamannya are a direct outcome of Eastern Indian linear conception. We agree that is closer to the Eastern Indian and Nepali but doubt whether all its stylistic features are a direct outcome.
38. Also see Moti Chandra, *Jaina Miniature Paintings from Western India*, Ahmedabad, 1949, pages 19-20, where he speaks of the Western Indian influence.

## Illustrations

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|-----------|--|
| Fig. 1    | : A drummer from Pathothamya (1080 A.D. pre-Kyanzitha period). |
| Fig. 1(a) | : A female dancer from Pathothamya.                            |
| Fig. 2    | : A drummer from Abeyadana (Kyanzitha period).                 |
| Fig. 3    | : —do—   |
| Fig. 4    | : A cymbal player from Abeyadana in <i>mandala sthane</i> .    |
| Fig. 5    | : A conch player from Abeyadana in <i>mandala sthane</i> .     |
| Fig. 6    | : A female dancer from Abeyadana in <i>mandala sthane</i> .    |
| Fig. 7    | : Buddha with flying <i>gandharva</i> -s and kneeling priests. |

- Fig. 8 : Flying figure, Pagoda No. 698.  
 Fig. 9 : Flying figure from Tawyagyaung (post-Kyanzittha period).  
 Fig. 10 : Kneeling figure with hands in *hamsasya* and *mrigesirasa* from Kondawgyi (post-Kyanzittha period).  
 Fig. 11 : Buddha with flying figure and kneeling figure, Pagoda No. 163.  
 Fig. 12 : Kneeling figure in stone from Htukkan-thein Mrohaung (16th century).  
 Fig. 13-17 : Wooden carvings from door-frame from Shwezigon (Kyanzittha period).  
 Fig. 18 & 18(a) : Line Drawings based on wood-carvings in Shwezigon.  
 Fig. 19 & 19(a) : — do — *Ardhamandali*, but an intermediary stage.  
 Fig. 20 : Nanda terrace, Mahanipata Jataka tablets, Dance scene (12th century).  
 Fig. 21 : Procession scene possibly of daughters of Mara, Nandamannya Minnanthu, late twelfth, early thirteenth century.  
 Fig. 22 : Copy of wall paintings from Payathon-zu.  
 Fig. 23 : Copy of wall painting from Payathon-zu, Minnanthu, Pagan (post-Kyanzittha period).  
 Fig. 24 : A music and dance scene on the walls of the Sulamani Pagoda. The Pagoda is ascribed to circa 1181, but the paintings belong to the eighteenth century.

All the illustrations are through the courtesy of the Archaeological Survey of Burma, Rangoon.



## Nautanki An Operatic Theatre

Suresh Awasthi

The National School of Drama, New Delhi, presented in September 1976, a Nautanki play, *Laila Majnu*, based on the popular romantic tale. The students staged the play under the guidance of the veteran Nautanki actor-singer Giriraj, who was assisted by a past student of the School, Anil Chaudhry of Mathura, one of the major centres of Nautanki theatre. This important event was an effort to relate our contemporary theatre work to the traditional theatre and was also part of the process of revival and revitalisation of the traditional theatre.

▲ *Laila Majnu*, a National School of Drama production.

This production gave the students a unique experience in operatic singing, and a feeling for the dramatic use of music in theatre. It is in the music of Nautanki that lies its unusual theatrical vitality. The play was presented in the traditional style on an open-air stage, though certain modern elements of theatrical production, such as blocking and grouping of characters, use of levels, and multiplicity of locales, were introduced. They added a new dimension to this traditional form, and made it more acceptable to urban audiences.

There have been several attempts in the last two decades directed towards re-forging creative links with the Nautanki form. In the mid-fifties Habib Tanvir mounted his controversial production of the Sanskrit classic *Mrichchhakatika* in Hindi translation entitled *Mitti ki Gadi* and called it 'Nai' (new) Nautanki. He did not convert the classic into an opera of the Nautanki style but used certain of the musical elements of Nautanki, and also its free and flexible structure. This production shocked the purists; but it did provide the possibility of treating the classics in a contemporary theatre idiom.

In 1960-61, when the present author was Honorary General Secretary of the Bharatiya Natya Sangh, the first Folk Drama Festival was held in Delhi and sponsored by the Sangh. The Jatra of West Bengal, the Maach of Madhya Pradesh were presented along with two Nautanki plays by a group of traditional Nautanki players. An attempt was made to restore the traditional mode, its values of production and the authentic music of Nautanki, all of which were, because of various influences, becoming hybrid; the form was seen to be disintegrating and losing its character. Mohan Upreti, folklorist and expert in traditional music, and Inder Razdan, an expert of folk theatre designs and crafts, were associated with me in this experimental production.

Later, in 1970, Shanta Gandhi, then a teacher at the National School of Drama, worked with a Nautanki group on *Amar Singh Rathor*, the popular Nautanki play. She introduced certain elements of the modern theatre, such as mime, movements and choreography, to add a dynamic quality to the otherwise static performance-structure of Nautanki, without in any way disturbing its basic design. There have also been other efforts in recent years in the same direction: Dr. Laxmi Narain Lal's *Ek Satya Harisha Chandra* and Poet Sarveshwar's *Bakari*, both political satires. Currently Bansi Kaul is rehearsing the Gogol classic, *The Inspector General*, as adapted by Mudrarakhshasa.

The Hindi-speaking region has a rich tradition of folk and popular theatre. The two great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and the *Bhagavad Purana* have been a source of rich thematic material, while the lyrics of the medieval poets of Brajbhasha, like Suradasa and Nandadasa, and Tulsidas's epic poem *Ramacharitmanas* have furnished textual material of poetic excellence.

From the highly developed and processional Leela Plays—the Rama-leela and Rasaleela—to plays in a lighter vein such as Naqal and Bhandeli,

there is an amazing variety of forms and presentational styles. Between these two categories lie operatic forms like the Nautanki, along with other forms of the same genre, such as the Swang and Bhagat (also of Uttar Pradesh), the Maach of Madhya Pradesh, the Khyal of Rajasthan and the Sang of Haryana.

These operatic forms evolved in the early eighteenth century, from the Akharha or Dargal tradition of singing and recitation of ballads and narratives like the Lawani, Khyal, Lahachari, Kajari, Rasia and Turra-Kalangi. But they are also related to similar minor dramatic forms with predominant elements of music and dance going back to the classical theatrical tradition. They seem to carry forward the medieval theatre conventions of dramatic recitation of epics and ballads. The *Natyashastra* and other later treatises on dramatic art mention minor forms or the *Uparupaka-s*, such as the *Natya Rasak*, *Sattak* and *Sangitaka* with similar elements as in the Nautanki and other variants of the Saangita tradition.

A proper study of Nautanki as an operatic form prevalent in Uttar Pradesh can be made only by placing it in the larger context of earlier as well as contemporary theatrical forms in the same operatic tradition. This vast popular operatic theatrical tradition of the Hindi region has been rightly categorised as Saangita by Ram Narain Agrawal, a scholar of this theatrical tradition. The earliest dramatic form in this tradition has been referred to as Swang in many poetic works of the early medieval period. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Amaroha (in the Moradabad District of Uttar Pradesh) developed as the main centre of these operatic plays; they were classed as Sang, Swang or Saangita. This Saangita theatrical tradition gradually migrated to other neighbouring regions. It is also related to the Leela plays, the Khyal, Bhagat and Swang, Amanat's *Inder-Sabha* of 1853 and the whole tradition of Sabha-plays, the tradition of the Rahas-plays at the court of Wajid Ali Shah, and finally to the medieval tradition of the dramatic recitation of epics and ballads.

While Nautanki, as part of the Saangita tradition, is related, both artistically and historically, to other forms such as the Sang or Swang, Bhagat, Khyal and Maach, it evolved certain distinctive features, especially in its own musical style. During its unbroken history of nearly a century it flourished in centres like Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Moradabad, Meerut, Hathras, Etawa, Etah, Kanpur, Lucknow, Kannauj, Manipuri, Agra and Mathura. The most active centres at the beginning of this century were Amaroha, Kannauj, Kanpur and Hathras. These centres evolved their own special styles of singing.

There are several theories about the origin of the name Nautanki. But the most convincing is the theory that when the earlier Swang form of the Hathras region reached Kanpur in the Swang called *Shahzadi Nautanki*, it became so popular with the audiences that they started referring to the theatrical form itself as Nautanki. There are similar instances of a theatrical form being named after the first or most popular play in that form. *Bidesia* of Bihar, *Parijat-Heran*, the operatic play of the Bijapur region, and *Inder-Sabha* of Amanat are examples illustrating this pattern of nomenclature.

Nautanki, as a dramatic form, stands midway between dramatic poetry and a fully developed literary drama. It also represents in many ways the conventions of the medieval theatre. The dramatic structure is rather simple; it is an episodic dramatisation of a narrative. The story line is straight, and the narrative unfolds with great fluidity, through small episodic units (like in the Rasaleela plays). These units are linked by the narrator known as Ranga, who is like the Sutradhara of the classical tradition. He introduces the episodes, helps to link them and provides essential information to the audience about those incidents which are not shown on the stage; he also summarises past events. Sometimes he describes the locale and, in some of his comments, he assumes the role of the playwright himself. Thus he plays a vital role in organising the narrative. But in recent years, the tendency has been to do away with the Ranga and organise the thematic material into a more formal dramatic mould. Some of his common utterances in the plays indicate his role as narrator:

दोहा : शीरोगुल को बंद कर, हथर लगा के ध्यान ।  
हाज़रीन जलसा सुनो, मज़मू वालीशान ॥

चौबोला : मज़मू वालीशान महोबा सुन्दर एक नगर था ।  
जहाँ मूप परिमाल का डंका बजता बाठ पहर था ॥

From Malkhan-Samar

The Ranga also often concludes the play with a verse like the *Bharata-vaakya* of classical Sanskrit drama.

स्वमस्तु कह नृपति को, दे अभीष्ट वादान ।  
जन पालन तारन प्रभू, हो गए उत्तरध्यान ॥

From Harishchandra

The Ranga, announcing action in prose, says:

जितेन्द्र को लेकर मृतेन्द्र हन्ड का जाना । प्रफ़िला का हाथ  
मलकर रह जाना, जंगल में जाकर जितेन्द्र का मृतेन्द्र से कहना ।

The Ranga frequently says:

बब बागे की दास्तां सुनिए हासो वाम ।  
or  
यकीं पर होठ यह किस्सा सुनो अब हाल बागे का ।  
or  
हल्प कर हाल हथर का सुनो याजरा उधर का ।

This simple dramatic structure is strengthened and sustained by a simple stage and economical staging methods. It is performed on a bare open platform-stage and, therefore, the writers have full freedom to orga-

nise the narrative material. They are not restricted in any way by considerations of the dramatic unities. The unlocalised, neutral acting area is non-representational; it is merely an arena for actors to demonstrate their art. It is given the specification of a locale through descriptions incorporated in the dialogue itself, or sometimes in the utterances of the Ranga. The actors' entries and exits are very informal; sometimes they remain present on the platform-stage all the time; by sitting near the musicians they suggest that they are no more engaged in the action. At an appropriate time they get up to recite and sing their lines and again get involved in the action.

### Stage and Stage Conventions

The platform-stage of Nautanki is a point of departure in the development of the acting area, and in the relationship of the performer to the audiences. In most of the folk forms of a lighter variety, the performance is held on the ground-level, with the audiences sitting on all sides. In forms like Naqal and Bhandaiti, the performance takes place in the midst of the audience, in the open air or under a shamiana, and the seating is so arranged that passages and corridors are created right among the audience for the presentation of dramatic action. Besides, in the course of the performance, the spectators keep moving and shifting to accommodate the movement of the performers.

The platform-stage vitally changes the relationship of the performer to the audience, and also affects the gestures and movements of the actor. The actor suddenly becomes more imposing and his gestures and movements broader. The absence of scenery further helps the actor to heighten his gestures and movements. Any scenic design or an effort at a realistic presentation of locale works against the spirit of this kind of informal open air platform-stage. The spectators partially lose the sense of proximity to the actor, but they have the advantage of watching the performance from various points, changing positions as it proceeds. This audience response is quite different from that in the proscenium theatre, which is tethered to a frontal view of the performance. Often the performances are held in mofussil towns in bazar streets, chaurahas, city chauk areas, and sarais; the audience sit at ground level, on specially erected galleries, roof tops, balconies and trees, with residential houses and shops all round. A theatrical performance in such an environmental setting is constantly affected by elements and factors outside the domain of the theatre proper. The performance overflows into the outside area, with social activity influencing the performance.

Like all folk and traditional theatre, Nautanki is also an audience-conscious theatre. The actor is fully aware of the presence of his audience and is primarily a performer who wants to demonstrate his skills in recitation, singing, mime, and to entertain a responsive audience. The myths, legends and tales of romance and valour that he presents to his audience are part of their tradition and, therefore, there is a greater possibility of a shared dramatic experience. The audiences, in any case, are also fully familiar with the text since the Nautanki plays are read and recited a great deal, especially during the rainy season when performances are not held.



The audiences are also sensitive to the music of the Nautanki to which they respond enthusiastically.

One of the other interesting conventions of this theatre is the delivery of the dialogue. Each line of the verse dialogue is recited and sung by the actor-singer three times for the benefit of the audiences sitting on the three sides of the stage in three blocks. This most interesting convention has unfortunately been given up now because of the use of curtains, or because the audiences sit only in front of the stage facing the actors. Formerly the repetition of the dialogues helped to familiarize the audiences with the story and quite often with the entire text so that the music could be enjoyed at a deeper level. This convention of dialogue delivery also influenced the actor's movements; he moved from one side of the large platform-stage to the other in dance-like movements. When the Nakkara repeated a musical phrase, the actors used to present a brief sequence of dance. The actors' dance movements followed the beat of the Nakkara and were accentuated by it.

#### Themes

There is range and variety in the themes of Nautanki plays. They are drawn from all possible sources: epics, myths, folklore, legends, historical episodes, social events, and topical, even local stories of romance, of bravery and sacrifice. The tradition has always been alive to socio-political questions such as child marriage, dowry, untouchability, and has also depicted episodes from the freedom movement. This theatre has freely used tales of romance and bravery from Islamic tradition and thus contributed towards a cultural synthesis with the Hindu heritage.

From Satya Harishchandra.



From Amar Singh Rathor

Plays like *Rama Vanavasa*, *Sita Harana*, *Parashurama*, *Virata Parva*, *Karna*, *Draupadi Chira Harana*, *Shishupala-Vadha* and *Abhimanyu* are based on the epics; *Raja Bhartrahari*, *Raja Bhoja*, *Guru Gorakhanatha*, *Raja Gopichandra*, *Nala-Damyanti*, *Savitri-Satyawan*, *Harishchandra*, *Shravana Kumara*, *Bhakta Purnamala*, *Prahlada*, *Manjha Rani* treat popular legends, some of which have served as dramatic source material for many folk and traditional forms all over the country. *Heer-Ranjha*, *Roop-Vasanta*, *Nihala Dey*, *Sohni-Mahiwal*, and *Dhola-Maru* deal with folk romances. There are several plays based on the ballad *Alha-Khand*. *Samrata Ashoka*, *Sikandara*, *Amar Singh Rathor*, *Maharana Pratap*, *Anarkali* are based on historical episodes; and *Jhansi ki Rani*, *Khune-Nahaq* (on Jallianwala Bagh), *Bhagat Singh*, *Subhash Chandra* deal with heroes and episodes of the freedom movement. *Laila Majnu* and *Shirin-Farhad* are based on Muslim romantic tales. *Raksha-Bandhan*, *Beti ka Sauda*, *Anmol Grihasthi* handle social themes; and *Sultana Daku*, *Amar Sati* treat topical events. *Ankha ka Nasha*, *Aurat ka Pyar* and *Shahzadi Nautanki* have a touch of eroticism. Sometimes the Nautanki players also produce scripts based on popular Hindi films such as *Anarkali*, *Mother India* and *Dil ki Pyas*.

#### Verse Dialogue

The most interesting element in the Nautanki form is the verse dialogue, which has a variety of metres, enriching both the poetic and musical content of the play. The writers use metres from Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu, and also create new metrical forms through various combinations and permutations. Dialogues are often based on popular and folk melodies and on tunes from the nineteenth century Parsi theatre. They also lean heavily on well-known film tunes. Some of the forms in vogue in Nautanki plays are: *Bahertabil*, *Chaubola*, *Doha*, *Lawani*, *Thumri*, *Dadra*, *Sher*, *Ghazal* and *Qawwali*. Among these, *Chaubola* and *Bahertabil* are the most popular.



From *Laila Majnu*

*Chaubola* is an old metrical form and basic to the Nautanki, and the entire Saangita tradition. In its musical rendering, it is eminently suited to the accompaniment of the Nakkara. It is capable of expressing various moods through appropriate *raga*-s. It can also serve to describe scenes and locales, and can be used for dramatic dialogues. It is capable of amazing musical variations and regional styles. *Bahertabil* is an equally popular metrical form, well-suited to Nakkara music, with a recitative quality that makes for strong dramatic effect.

Till the 1930's Nautanki actor-singers used to present a brief dance pattern after singing the *Chaubola* as is the practice in many other traditional theatre forms. This practice has been an integral part of the Saangita tradition. Amanat's *Inder-Sabha*, written in 1853, has stage-directions suggesting the presentation of dance sequences. Now these have been given up and the Nautanki performance has become flat, static, and lost much of its lustre.

The following examples of *Chaubola* and *Bahertabil* indicate the musical and theatrical potential of these song-forms:

दोहा : दिल उलफा तुलके नहीं, बुरा इश्क का फंद ।  
सनम शिताबी सेज चल, न जन मेरा फरखंद ॥

चौबोला : न जन मेरा फरखंद चन्द्रमुख, हँस हँस गले लगा लो ।  
कहो न मौसी, माशुका अपनी सरकार बना लो ॥

मा-हा साऊँ पकै फैयाँ, तैयौँ बरपान भिटा लो ।  
जंग मचा लो जौवन से, दिलखानी मचा उड़ा लो ॥

दोहा : जान तुम पर निसार थी । वस्त्र की तलबगार थी ।  
बड़ी उम्मीदवार थी ।  
वाए बड़ी मेहरबानी की, बंदी बेकार थी ॥

बहरेतबील : न गृहस्थी का सुत कुछ हर्म है फिला,  
न तो परमात्मा के ही घर के रहे ।  
पाप का बोझ सर पर लदा है लड़ा,  
न हथर के रहे ना उथर के रहे ॥

There are many dialogues in the Lawani form. Lawani, as a song-form, is prevalent over the whole of the Hindi-speaking region, and also in several other regions such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. It has greatly contributed to the origin and development of the operatic theatre not only of the Saangita tradition, but that of other regions. One such dialogue in Lawani in *Malkhan Samar* indicates its theatrical quality:

सजी हुई दोनों ओर सेना, लड़न के सातिर निकल रही है ।  
इधर है फलसे, उधर है ताहर, समर मैं ज़ख्मीर चक्क रही है ॥

The following dialogue has an element of dramatic recitation, and its rhythmic structure is very similar to that of the verse dialogue of the plays of the Parsi theatre:

जा गया, जा गया, जा गया, जा गया ।  
जा गया का मैं कौशिक मुनी जा गया ॥  
कुल फिकर हट गयी, हा गया, हा गया,  
मेरी तबियत पर चैनो-जवन हा गया ॥

Several of the dialogues in the Nautanki plays are written in the 'tarze theatre' tune following the pattern of the Parsi theatre. In *Shakuntala*, a dialogue between Dushyanta, Shakuntala and the *sakhi*-s runs thus:

इस चमन मैं जाने वाले, ज़मी वाह, वाह, वाह, कहाँ कौन ढो तुम?  
मैंवरे की उड़ान वाला, ज़मी वाह, वाह, वाह, दुष्यंत हूँ मैं ।

मैंवरा उड़ाया आपने, मतलब था क्या पड़ा ।  
अफसोस है बड़ा, अफसोस है बड़ा ॥

डर ज़रा न साने वाले, ज़मी वाह, वाह, वाह, कहाँ कौन ढो तुम ।

A dialogue in *Veermati* runs thus:

Veermati: सुनियो बात मेरी बितवार । बावे जब तक नहिं परतार ।  
जार्ज मैं न किसी के द्वार । लीजै मान, मान, मान ।।

Jamvati: बेटी क्यों ठाने है ठान, मेरा कहना लीजै मान ।  
कल दो अब मेरे स्थान, कही मान, मान, मान ।।

It is not only in the Nautanki plays but also in the plays of the literary tradition, especially the stage-plays written for Ramaleela performances, that dialogues came to be written in tunes inspired by the Parsi theatre. The rhythm of these dialogues is very close to the spoken language, and is synchronised with the movements of the actors. The short phrase units permit a great deal of rhythmic variety. The repetition of the verbal units imparts a dramatic quality both to the delivery and physical action.

From the point of view of dramatic quality, the dialogues in the *Derha tuki* metre are very effective, as in the popular play *Shahposh*:

क्यों दाग लगाता है मियाँ ज्ञानदान में,  
वोरे अपनी ज्ञान में ।  
फूलब के दोस्त, यार हैं सब इस जहान में,  
हो किस गुमान में ।।

Sometimes prose dialogues are also used, and these are called 'drama', because the impetus for their introduction came from the Parsi plays. Prose dialogues are used in comical interludes or by the Ranga to describe a scene or narrate an episode. Some of the prose dialogues are also in the nature of stage directions. Following the practice of the Parsi plays, these prose dialogues are rhymed, as in the comical interlude *Ankha ka Tara*:

जब मावर की शिम्प से बाहर बाया, तब मावर ने यमुपुर का  
टिकट कटाया । जिस वार्ड ने दूध पिलाया, उसकी काल ने  
हाया । वालिद ने पाला तो उनके जिस का निकल गया  
दिवाला । .....

Tapasi in *Shakuntala* says:

वो राजन् तू क्या कहता है ? सेवा करेगा तो वोरे नई मैं  
परेगा । बाव रत पकटाया । बाँझों से बाँझ बहाया ।

It is because of this great variety of metrical and song forms that there is a tradition of reciting Nautanki plays in small groups, specially during the rainy season when this open air theatre remains inactive. Nautanki plays run into many editions. Semi-literate industrial workers and peasants buy and read Nautanki plays. The colloquial idiom, the popular poetic and musical content, and the absorbing narrative hold a strong appeal for this class. The Nautanki plays are also sold to immigrant Indians all over South-East Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. These printed plays are sold in many towns all over the Hindi-speaking regions in book-shops in old localities and in temple alleys along with other popular and religious literature. The Nautanki writer, Krishan Pahiwan of Kanpur, and the adopted son of the famous Nautanki writer and actor, Nattha Ram of Hatharas, turned publishers of Nautanki plays and prospered.

### Music

Nautanki music has a wide range and variety; it draws from multiple sources—classical, regional folk and popular, and the urban theatre. It synthesises all these elements into an integrated whole, which acquires the distinctiveness of Nautanki theatrical music. It is further enriched by musical dialogue in a variety of metrical forms. Classical *raga*-s like Bhairavi, Saranga, Asavari, Shyamkalyana, Kalangara, Bageshwari and Yamana are frequently used. The *raga*-s are, however, used in their popular mode, without any strict adherence to pure norms. Actor-singers are not formally trained in classical music. They have a feel for the *raga* and its mood. If you ask an actor about the *raga* that he is using in a dialogue, he will say that the piece has the *chhaya* or *chhata* (a shadow or glimpse) of such and such a *raga*. Bhairavi is most commonly used for *Chaubola*. Songs in certain metrical forms are rendered in different *raga*-s to suit different situations and moods. While Bhairavi is used to express pathos and separation, Yamana is used to express the sentiment of love.

The opening prayer song (*Mangalacharan*, *Sumirini* or *Vandana*) is sung in the Dhrupad style similar to that of the music of the Rasaleela of Vrindavan. The music of the Rasa tradition has a strong influence on Nautanki music. The popular song-form of the Rasia of Braj is also used in Nautanki, and often given a classical flavour. Lawani is also rendered in many *ranget*-s or musical styles. Nautanki music also has regional stylistic variations, with two main styles, namely Hathrasi and Kanpuri. While the Hathrasi style is musically more developed and permits embellishment, the Kanpuri is predominantly recitative.

Music is the very soul of Nautanki and determines its pace and tempo. The musical structure builds the performance pattern; it leads and follows the actors' movements and physical action. The Nakkara, a kettledrum played with sticks, is the main percussion instrument, along with the dholak. They build the rhythmic structure. The Nakkara both follows and repeats the lines and phrases sung and recited by the actors.

A study of the popular Nautanki theatre will be incomplete unless we trace its relationship with the commercial Parsi theatre movement of the nineteenth century. This process of inter-action between the popular and folk theatre and the commercial and urban theatre is a common phenomenon, and forms an essential aspect of the study of traditional theatre.

It is interesting to note that the Parsi theatre drew inspiration at the time of its origins and development from the tradition of the Saangita theatre in respect of themes, dramatic elements, verse dialogue and music. But in the 1920's and 1930's, the Nautanki theatre itself came under the direct and powerful influence of the Parsi theatre. Nautanki companies take pride in using the terms 'theatrical' and 'dramatic' with their names in order to identify themselves with the urban theatre. Painted curtains began to be used in the 1940's; comical interludes running parallel to the main story were included; dialogues in 'tarze-theatre', (based on the tunes of the Parsi theatre), were inserted. In addition to these elements, the use of prose dialogues called 'drama' and of *Mangalacharan*, *Vandana* or *Sumirini* on the pattern of the chorus in the Parsi theatre are some of the obvious influences of the Parsi theatre on the Nautanki form. Some of the popular song-forms (Thumri, Dadra and Lawani) of the Nautanki tradition were also popular in the Parsi theatre. There has been a constant give-and-take between the two theatrical traditions. For several years there was a spirit of competition between the two, especially in the large industrial cities. Artistes would leave one to join the other; and there was a large common audience, with shared tastes and values.

Inter-action between these two theatrical traditions added to the richness and vitality of both these streams—but only insofar as it remained a healthy creative process, and the borrowed elements did not disturb the basic structure and the primary conventions of the form. Unfortunately at a later stage the Nautanki theatre came to be so powerfully influenced by the Parsi theatre (mainly because the latter was so popular and had greater financial and artistic resources) that it started losing its distinctive character. Soon its basic structure itself was seriously damaged.

One has only to watch a Nautanki performance to understand the nature and extent of this damage. One can observe it in any of the many fairs in Uttar Pradesh presented in a huge circus-type pandal with glittering tube-lights, painted curtains, (converting the traditional simple platform-stage into a kind of proscenium stage), the audiences sitting on one side in front of the stage, the sarangi replaced by the foot-harmonium called organ or just peti or baja in the manner typical of the Parsi theatre. This Nautanki theatre is the Parsi theatre, but in its decadent form; the only element which has saved it from total decay is its music, which still has great theatrical variety, vitality and dynamism.

#### *The Sociological Aspect*

Apart from the purely theatrical aspect, a study of Nautanki is equally fascinating from the socio-cultural point of view. Its themes and

their treatment, its poetic and musical content, its actors and their social background, and finally its audiences—all these facets are integral to its theatrical character. It is interesting to note that Nautanki originated and grew in Kanpur, a big industrial centre with several textile mills, an Ordnance Factory and the Hindustan Aircraft Factory employing a large contingent of skilled workers. Even today Kanpur remains the main centre of the Nautanki theatre, and one can see the sign-boards of scores of Nautanki companies in the Rail Bazar Mohalla, adjoining the Kanpur Railway Station.

The Nautanki theatre primarily entertains industrial labour and peasants. Nautanki audiences form a distinctive social group, with their roots in a rural culture though they live in an urban setting. The performances are mostly held during fairs, festivals and exhibitions and are part of a larger social event, which vitally influences their character. The main patrons of this theatre have, by tradition, been princely rulers, landlords, taluqadars, and big businessmen. They sponsored Nautanki shows during marriages and other family celebrations along with the *naach* by singing girls. In the social scale Nautanki shows have always been equated with the *naach* of the *baie*-s. Thus this theatre has been nurtured in a feudal set-up by feudal values.

The actors and musicians for the Nautanki theatre come from various social classes and groups; they do odd jobs, with occasional assignments in Nautanki shows. They are mechanics, tailors, factory workers, vendors, hawkers, peasants, and clerks. They are often social rejects and drop-outs. Most of the companies maintain a skeleton team: the leader, the main actors and the musicians; as and when they get assignments, they book the required artists for various roles in the play that they decide to do.

From a sociological point of view, the most interesting factor is the inclusion of actresses for doing female roles. As in other folk drama, male actors used to play female roles. In the mid-30's Trimohan's company used actresses for the first time for female roles. Gulabjan and Krishnabai belong to this generation of actresses. Gulabjan has now her own company and is the greatest exponent of the Nautanki theatre. She has been honoured by the State Akademi. Krishnabai's company is also very popular. In 1954, with the passing of the law called the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, prostitution was banned. This displaced prostitutes and singing girls from their profession, particularly those in the industrial centre, Kanpur. Deprived of their source of livelihood, most of them joined the local Nautanki companies. Some, like Gulabjan, organised their own companies with a large number of female artistes, and at times female artistes played male roles, reversing the age-old theatrical tradition. This class of actresses brought a new gaiety and verve to the Nautanki performances because they were skilled in the arts of music and dance. They made the performance entertaining and also injected into it a good deal of sex appeal.

The practice of presenting five or ten rupee notes to the actress-singer during the course of a performance often gives rise to fierce competition amongst the members of the audience, leading to fist fights and stabbing



## Obituaries

### *Kesarbai Kerkar (1892-1977)*



When I heard the news of Kesarbai Kerkar's death on Friday, September 16, 1977, I suddenly felt that a phase in the history of our classical music had come to an end. In her strict adherence to the Jaipur style which she had imbibed from her guru Ustad Alladiya Khan, she symbolised a quality distinctive of musicians of the period. But the choice of this particular style was not a matter of mere coincidence or simply a case of a family tradition inherited and carried forward by a gifted descendant. The story of her long struggle to persuade Ustad Alladiya Khan to accept her as a disciple reflects not just a dedication to music but more specifically the workings of a superior intelligence. Once she had decided—and that, too, at a very early age—that she wanted to equip herself with what she considered as the best in Hindustani classical music, she doggedly pursued her aim. In 1949 I met her, hoping to gain from her a first-hand account of her musical beginnings.

Born in the village of Keri, in Goa, in 1892, in a family whose only source of livelihood was musical performances, Kesarbai began to learn music when she was barely eight. Her family visited Kolhapur for a short

incidents. The presentation of money is almost a ritual. The spectator is provoked at a climactic moment in the rendering of a song, or during a dance sequence. A suggestive gesture, or merely an inviting wink suffice. He gets up and presents a five rupee note to the actress; she often displays the note, kisses it, announces the name of the donor and puts it away in her blouse. Another spectator may then get up and present a note of a higher denomination, cast a meaningful look in the direction of the actress, and press her hands softly while presenting the note. Sometimes the note is also given to the Ranga who passes it on to the actress on the stage.

Nautanki performances often create a law and order situation, and were, therefore, banned for many years within the municipal limits of Kanpur city. To discourage this so-called anti-social theatre, a very high entertainment tax (30 to 40 per cent) was imposed. It has now been reduced to 20 per cent. The police keep a constant watch on the companies, and on their offices because the actors, singers and dancers mix freely with those listed as 'bad' characters in the police records. Thus a world of lusty entertainment, reminiscent of the world of the Kothewalis and with a similar social etiquette and atmosphere, is now regarded with suspicion. This theatre upsets the social norms of the middle class for whom it is a theatre of profanity.

spell and for ten months she studied under Khan Sahib Abdul Karim Khan. When they returned to Goa she had an opportunity to receive instruction from Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze for a few years.

When Kesarbai was sixteen, the family moved to Bombay and she began to learn music from Khansahib Barkatullah, the famous *beenkar*. But since he had responsibilities which took him to Patiala and Mysore, she decided to study with Pandit Bhaskarbuwa Bakhale. This last period of tuition lasted for a bare five months because the teacher moved to Pune. Then she turned to Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze again for a year but by then she had resolved that if she had to study music seriously it would be under the tutelage of Ustad Alladiya Khan and none else!

For full three years friends and well-wishers exerted every kind of pressure to persuade the Ustad to accept her as a pupil. The conditions he set down were extremely stringent but Kesarbai's determination was unbounded. The formal initiation took place on January 1, 1921. The instruction routine included nine hours of practice every day in the presence of the guru and two hours of *mandra sadhana* at dawn. The strain at first seemed almost unbearable, but it was Kesarbai's own indomitable will which helped her to survive this physical and mental ordeal.

Kesarbai described to me in detail Khan Sahib's method of teaching. She would begin with the *aroha-avaroha* of a *raga* and he had her repeat a *palta* literally a hundred thousand times in a slow tempo, correcting even the slightest error she made.

The first *raga* Ustad Alladiya Khan taught her was Todi and to correspond to it the evening session would comprise Multani. So it was with the other *raga*-s. Deskar in the morning corresponding with Bhupa, Shudhakalyan in the evening; Vibhas in the morning with Jayat in the evening and so on.

This routine continued for full eight years, the only respite being when the teacher was away from Bombay for a few weeks. Later, the sessions were reduced to just one—in the morning. This kind of rigour in training speaks both of Kesarbai's own devotion to her art and Khan Sahib's painstaking concern, his determination to impart to her all of the best that he had. His only regret, expressed to her a little before his death, was that he had still a great deal to give and that she had not emptied his treasure-hoard of music. Her own attitude to accumulating *cheesha*-s was characteristic: "I took from him only what I could assimilate and nothing more", she told me.

This discernment was evident in Kesarbai's answers to my questions about the nomenclature of *raga*-s. She said, "Critics do not like the name Maru-Bihag. They hope to discover Marwa in it, and not finding it, they suggest the name Yamani-Bihag. But for that matter where is there Sarang in Goud-Sarang? Or Dhanashri in Puriya-Dhanashri? There is Goud in Goud-Sarang but beyond the *pancham*, it is like Bilawal, with a touch of Bihag. Should we call it Goud-Bihagi-Bilawal then? In Puriya-Dhanashri, there is Puriya but beyond the *pancham*, it is like Purvi. Should we therefore re-name it Puriya-Purvi?"

Kesarbai sounded as logical as a scientist when she argued thus. The same approach was evident in her answer to my query about the various types of Kafi-Kanada sung by the exponents of the Jaipur *gharana*.

"There are eighteen Kanada-s. Bageshri, Nayaki, Darbari, Sahana are all Kanada-s. One could add a tinge of Kafi to each of these and have eighteen Kafi-Kanada-s. We sing four or five. What is so objectionable in that?" Then she added, "In my time to get a chance to learn serious music was in itself so difficult an enterprise. There was no discussion, no bookish rules. The emphasis was on voice production, on careful presentation under the guidance of a teacher". And the approach is so wonderfully embodied in the famous composition of her guru in the *raga* Tilak Kamod.

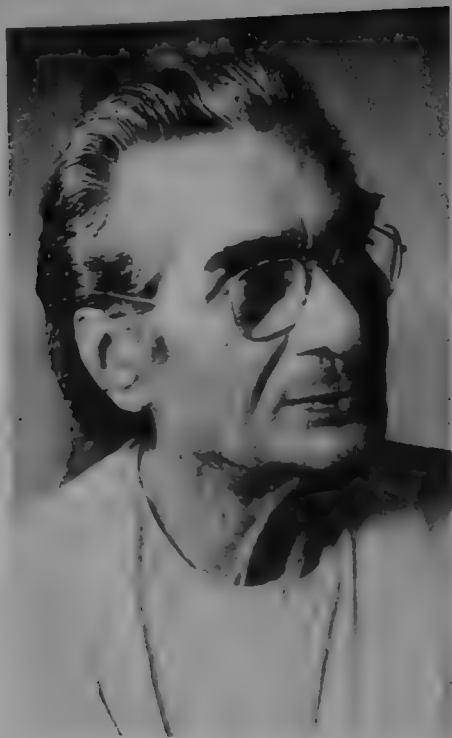
सुर संगत राग विषा,  
संगीत प्रमाण जो कंठ कर दिहावे,  
वाकी जानिये गुनी ज्ञानी  
उनुदत लघुगुरु छुत ताल मूर्धन्य  
राखिये संगत सौ,  
अच्छर सुच बानी .

It was a training that yielded rich dividends. From 1930 till the moment of her retirement in 1963-64, she impressed her listeners with the wide range and superb quality of her music. She became the foremost exponent of the Jaipur *gharana* with its accent on the slow tempo and on the complexity of musical phrasing to build an organic entity. In their style of singing, the *raga* shapes itself like a piece of sculpture, each *swara* is so placed as to enhance the beauty of the other and to define the subtle play with the *matra*-s of the *tala*. The impact of Kesarbai's singing prompted Rabindranath Tagore to describe it as "an artistic phenomenon of exquisite perfection . . . the revelation of the miracle of music only possible for a born genius". It was Tagore who acclaimed her as Surashree, the Queen of Melody.

Several honours were conferred on her in recognition of her unique contribution to music. In 1952, the Sangeet Natak Akademi honoured her with the Presidential Award for Classical Music. In 1969, she received the title of Padma Bhushan. The National Centre for the Performing Arts instituted the Kesarbai Kerkar Scholarship Fund in her honour.

Kesarbai reigned supreme in the world of classical music for full three decades and more. She adhered unwaveringly to the stern standards laid down by her guru and refused to dilute them to please listeners. The same principled approach informed her decision to retire at the peak of her musical career. She refused to present anything less than the best. Her listeners came to her concert not merely to be entertained. They returned home chastened, uplifted. It could truly be said that she moulded musical taste.

—B. R. DEODHAR.



Uday Shankar, pioneer in Indian ballet, died in Calcutta on September 26, 1977. Born on December 8, 1900, in Udaipur, he was named after the city. His parents were from Bengal; his father was Prime Minister of the princely state of Jhalawar in Rajasthan.

Uday Shankar was drawn to painting in his youth and he was sent for further studies to the Royal Academy of Arts, London. About the time Anna Pavlova, the celebrated Russian ballerina, toured India and responded so deeply to the sights and sounds of the country that when she returned to Europe, she contemplated doing two ballets on Indian themes: "Krishna and Radha" and "The Hindu Wedding". In London, she met Uday Shankar and invited him to join her as Indian dance partner and help her choreograph the pieces. Much against the wishes of his teacher, Sir William Rothenstein, Uday Shankar gave up his career as a painter to devote himself wholly to dance. In the 'twenties, he toured Europe and America with Anna Pavlova's troupe and returned to India in 1929.

Uday Shankar's early efforts were tentative. He composed small dance pieces and ballets. The background of painting had equipped him with a sensitive eye for pattern and colour. This contributed to the aesthetic quality of his work. With his intuitive grasp of rhythm and sound, he could draw the best from those who composed the music for his dances. He insisted always on Indian orchestral music (without words or song) and on an orchestra comprising exclusively of Indian musical instruments. Uday Shankar was convinced that the root of all dance lay in the harmonious relationship of body and mind and that its projection depended on the cultural ethos of the people from whom a particular dance originated and among whom it evolved. His studies in this field began with simple walking and as the period of training continued he realized the potential of the body as an instrument to communicate states of mind, to develop discipline, concentration, alertness and creativity.

In the early 'thirties, Uday Shankar organised a tour of Europe with Indian dancers and musicians; among them were Ustad Alaaddin Khan, Vishnudas Shirali, Timir Baran and his younger brother Ravi Shankar. His dance partner was the Frenchwoman Simone Barbiere (Simkie). He travelled all over India, studying the architecture, painting and dance forms of the land. Later he took lessons in Kathakali from the late Guru Shankaran Namboodripad. He founded the Indian Culture Centre at Almora in 1939.

Uday Shankar choreographed Indian dances with contemporary themes: *Labour and Machinery* and *Rhythm of Life*. He produced the shadow-play *Ram-Leela* and the dance-based film *Kalpans*. He created *Shankarascope*, hoping to synthesize film and theatrical art.

Uday Shankar became a legend in his life-time. He was made a Fellow of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, and awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1971. The Vishwa-Bharati University conferred on him in 1975 the title of 'Deshikottama' for his unique contribution to the renaissance of Indian dance.

Uday Shankar's dances were the distillations of his own creative acumen and artistic sensibility. He shaped the form and format of what later came to be called Indian ballet. He won Indian dance world-wide acceptance as an art form. He did not merely enrich Indian dance; through his bold innovations a new form was born.

—MOHAN KHOKAR.

## News and Notes

*Jagar on May 21, 1977 at Kokner, Palghar District, Maharashtra.*

In the month of May, 1977, the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and Development, the National Social Service and the University Music Centre (University of Bombay) undertook a unique venture called *Jagar* in the village of Kokner in the Palghar District of Maharashtra.

The village is about sixty miles from Bombay and the students of the University have been working there with the local Adivasis in a programme of social and economic development. An additional cultural bias was sought to be added to this programme. Various amateur groups in the field of dance, drama and music were invited for preliminary discussions and it was decided to hold a full-night festival of the performing arts at Kokner on the 21st of May. The first half of the all-night festival was allotted to the Adivasi artistes and the latter part to artistes from the urban centres. The underlying aim was to ensure a mutual exposure of Adivasi and urbanized art-forms, to watch and weigh the responses. Adivasi groups from about ten neighbouring villages performed in the *Jagar*. About forty artistes from Pune, Bombay, Mahad and Aurangabad represented the urban segment. Nearly three thousand people watched the programmes with lively interest till the early hours of the morning.

One cannot be quite sure about how this experiment should be assessed. The following morning when I met some field-workers in the adjoining Shiva Temple, some revealing comments were made. On the whole, the idea of mutual exposure was appreciated. But urban items of a half-hour duration were felt to be too short. C. T. Khanolkar's playlet, *Zadaveri Bole Kaga*, presented by Madhav Vaze and his associates from Pune, was appreciated for its whimsicality and its earthy sense of justice. The playlet centres round a crow's comments and a narration-cum-enactment of the story of an aged king's wife getting 'effectively' enamoured of the king's peon! Short skits on the police-thief and the dowry theme, presented by the Gossip Group (Bombay) were well liked. These contained lot of mime and were slickly presented. The didactic *powada*-s of the Mahad Group were heard in silence: they dealt with the theme of abstaining from drink! Similarly, *bhajan*-s by Shri Appasaheb Inamdar (Pune) evoked a lukewarm response.

The Adivasi items were full of verve and were marked by audacity of content. There were no inhibitions; there was no exhibitionism either. The Terpi and Tipri dances were instances of amazing rhythmic precision and concentration. Improvisation and participation were evident at their fullest. The Terpi-player improvised a rhythm-motif and the dancers immediately responded by changing the steps. Members of the audience came

and joined when they felt like doing so. At one time there were about fifty dancers on the makeshift earth-mound that formed the decorated stage—all of them immersed in the dance and the accompanying music! Unfortunately we did not have any suitable recording equipment with us.

For the urban artistes it was an experience to watch the Adivasis' totally absorbed attitude towards their art. At times the friendly indifference of the audience was also of great interest. It was almost dawn when the *Jagar* came to an end. Many of the Adivasis from the neighbouring villages had come in their bullock carts along with their families, and they left immediately to face a day of toil in their fields. The urban artistes complained that they were 'tired'.

—ASHOK RANADE

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*International Musicological Society, 12th Congress, University of California, Berkeley, August 21-27, 1977.*

This 12th Congress, of a society founded in 1910, is the first to be held on the West Coast of the United States. It is, even more, the first to concern itself with a global approach to musicology. The title, "Interdisciplinary Horizons in the Study of Musical Traditions, East and West," was underlined by the events most capturing my attention and intermittent attendance.

The court session on "Court Dance: East and West" was co-chaired by Marie-Françoise Christout of the Bibliothèque de L'Arsenal, Paris, and Sudarsono of the National Dance Academy of Indonesia. They shared the Asian honors with Shigeo Kishibe, Emeritus Professor of Music, Tokyo University. Meredith Little of Stanford University and Ingrid Brainard of Massachusetts discussed European traditions and reconstructions. With the aid of cogent comments over the course of the afternoon session by Medha Yodh von Essen (who teaches Bharata Natyam at the University of California, Los Angeles) and Ricardo Trimillos, University of Hawaii, the East-West encounter proved to be quite stimulating.

Kishibe and Sudarsono rightly pointed out that in Japan and Indonesia, court tradition is still alive. Court dance is rarefied in the sense that the public is only infrequently allowed to see these highly refined art forms. Both styles derived in part from outside influences, the *bugaku* in Japan from China and Korea and even Central Asia and India; the Indonesian more clearly and directly from India. Both styles have postural evidence of these influences, and, in some instances, abundant sculptural evidence. It provides a shiver to the spine now and again.



The afternoon session permitted the showing of two remarkable films: one on *Genrojukai*, a *bugaku* dance of the right, danced in red and said to have come through China and some reaches of Central Asia. It provided a glimpse of the Imperial Household's Music Department in the Palace, the court musicians dressed in the garments of Heian Dynasty bureaucrats.

The film started with a deliberate display of several *bugaku* masks, including an intriguing red one with oversized nose, movable forward and back. *Genrojukai* itself is a solo, a rarity in a repertoire of some hundred dances, most of which are performed in groups of four. This particular dance may well be the one glimpsed in one scene of the movie "Gate of Hell", for *bugaku* has continued to be danced at Nara and the Shrine of Ise as long as it has been in the Imperial Court. Tibetan dance provides one with evidences of common roots with *bugaku* in stances of dancer, costume and some gestural and floor patterns.

The second film, "Baroque, 1675-1725", was the joint project of dance historian Shirley Wynne and filmmaker—Dance Department Chairman at UCLA, Allegra Fuller Synder. Aside from her superb juxtapositions of drawing and live dance, of costume detail and design, Dr. Synder looked at the Western court dance as if it needed examining by the same methods one uses in approaching non-Western dance forms. The results are startling and the film is an exciting contribution to dance scholarship.

Ricardo Trimillos pointed out that the presentation of the Western tradition in dance scholarship is a reconstruction process. In Asia, however, it is a matter of regeneration, revivification. Trimillos also observed that a tradition usually gets codified by a monarch, though the evolution of the form predates it several centuries. (Manuscripts in Japan date from the 13th century; my copy of the *Natyashastra* dates it 500 B.C.)

Cancellations at the last minute deprived us of the presence of Dr. Juana von Laban and Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan.

The East-West emphasis was pursued by presentations of students of the American Society for Eastern Arts (ASEA) who performed on two evenings *gamelan* selections and court dances from Java. A composition for *gamelan* and organ was played during the opening ceremonies. A Friday session featured Kuniraman (Kathakali); Chitresh Das (Kathak); and, for Bharata Natyam, a Caucasian exponent, Luise Scripps. The juxtaposition of performers perhaps more than any other one thing underscored the anomalies of the meeting of East and West.

—RENEE RENOUF

## *17th General Assembly and the Congress of the International Music Council, October 1-9, Czechoslovakia.*

One of the most important musical events of the year was the World Music Week which was held during the 17th General Assembly and the Congress of the International Music Council from October 1 to 9 in Czechoslovakia.

World Music Week was inaugurated in the Knights' Hall of Bratislava Castle on October 2. The occasion coincided with the formal opening of the General Assembly of the International Music Council. The function concluded with Prof. Dr. Peter Colotka, Prime Minister of Slovakia giving the International Music Council's awards for distinguished services to music to Tikhon Nikolaevich Khrennikov, General Secretary of the Union of Composers of the USSR and Chairman of the USSR National Music Council, Benny Goodman, American Jazz musician, Luis Heitor Correa de Azevedo, Brazilian folk music researcher, Ephraim Amu, Ghanaian musical pedagogue, and Riadh Sombati, Egyptian composer.

In the course of a brief address, Dr. Narayana Menon, President of the International Music Council, said: "Our long term objective should be to create in the minds of all those who love music a greater awareness of the world's musical heritage; a greater awareness of the role of music in international understanding. Otherwise, music will remain, however subtle, however sophisticated, something created in isolation, something which expresses the pain that is in all of us in alienation, when it should be expressing the joy within us to be shared by us all. Our purpose should be discovery and rediscovery, presentation and dissemination. By this we shall know what we are. We shall know what we are to one another . . ."

From Bratislava the delegates and guests of World Music Week travelled to Prague for the Congress on the subject of the problems of interpreters in the present-day world. The Congress was planned and conducted by Dr. Jiri Bajer. Four important statements were made at the introductory session: Prof. D. Jaroslav Zich, Czech composer and scholar, spoke about the interpreter as a creative personality; Mr. Rudolf Leuzinger from Switzerland about the position of the musician in Euro-American musical life; Dr. Tran Van Khe, Vietnamese scholar and musician, about the traditional musician in Asia and Prof. Kwabena Nketia about the situation in Africa. There were five panel discussions presided over by Prof. Boris Yarustovsky of the USSR, Prof. Hans Pischner of GDR, Dr. Narayana Menon of India, Dr. Jaroslav Seda of Czechoslovakia and Mr. Rudolf Leuzinger of Switzerland (in the absence of Mr. John Morton of Britain).

Apart from a large number of concerts and operatic performances—special mention should be made of a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Tyl Theatre where it had its first performance—many of which were in the framework of the Bratislava Music Festival, there were a number of exhibitions devoted to such fascinating subjects as the GRAMO 1977 Exhibition, Czech Concert Art, exhibitions of contemporary works by Czech and Slovak composers.

## Report from Ahmedabad: Shreyas Kutch Fair, April 1977.

Among social events such as birth, wedding and death rites, fairs, festivals, dances and recitals the most typical and vital is the fair or *mela*. Like any other cultural event the *mela* incorporates traditional institutionalised practices as well as local variations. The *mela* is not a performance but a complex of performances. It has a heterogeneous character since its participants come from various social and religious strata and it includes activities ranging from the solemn religious ceremony to the mundane purchase and sale of objects. Most of the performances of folk dance and music are connected with folk fairs (*loka-mela*) and festivals.

Performances at a *loka-mela* essentially differ from those conducted on the stage — both in the matter of performance and audience participation. A good development in recent times is that the folk forms are now being protected, studied and documented. Ironically enough, in this very process the form and content are violated and quite often the real purpose is lost. These living forms become static in the process of documentation and especially so in the act of restaging outside their context. Folk dances and musical performances within the context of a *loka-mela* are related to such factors as a large open space, the atmosphere of a river bank or a hillock, the occasion for a religious ceremony or harvest operations or participation by various communities etc. Cultural performances in such *mela*-s are neither limited to the 'performance time' of three hours nor are the 'items' 'presented' to the 'audience' by the 'performers' in a sequential order. In a traditional fair, the dance and music performances, the religious ceremonies, the acrobatic shows, the film screenings, and buying and selling of foodstuff and other commodities take place simultaneously and are interconnected. The *mela* is a vast 'stage' where the 'audience' becomes the 'performer' or vice versa depending on the mood and pleasure of the participants. The entire scheme is controlled by a network of social, religious and economic factors.

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For the last sixteen years the Shreyas Foundation, Ahmedabad has organised a three-day annual *mela* on its twenty-acre campus. Every year the dance and music forms of the selected area are studied, its general folklore investigated, groups of dancers and musicians contacted and prominent arts and crafts of the region listed. The fair is held in April; musicians and dancers, craftsmen and shopkeepers are invited to come and perform their arts, or demonstrate their craft-techniques, and sell their products exactly as in a village fair. The fair resembles the traditional *loka-mela* but at the same time it is basically an act of staging items on a large campus with rural participants but in an urban setting and for an urban audience. The fair is a secular reconstruction and, therefore, the basis of religion or the annual sacred cycle of a *loka-mela* is obviously absent.

Within this framework the Shreyas Folk Fair offers town audiences a glimpse into traditional village life with special reference to the performing arts. And during the preparations for such a fair a detailed study of dance

forms, costumes, habits, customs, elements of music and the various arts and crafts is undertaken; some of these are documented. This also affords Shreyas an opportunity to build a collection of costumes, musical instruments and various other art objects. A partial outcome of this activity is the creation of the Shreyas Folk Museum of Gujarat.

A traditional rural *mela* is a medium of mass communication and so is the Shreyas Fair. On the one hand, it provides education to the public about various cultural regions and, on the other, the members of the Shreyas educational complex are able to see and participate in the performances of the *mela*.

The Shreyas Kutch Fair was organised from the 23rd to the 25th of April, 1977. Kutch District forms a part of north-west Gujarat. It is bounded on the north and north-east by Rajasthan, on the north and north-west by Sind, on the south by the Gulf of Kutch and on the south-west and west by the Arabian Sea. Kutch provides authentic material for the study of an island-culture. The inner 'island' is surrounded by a large expanse covered with a thick salt layer mixed with fine sand and clay and is called Rann from the Sanskrit *irina* or 'waste', not to be confused with 'desert'. The district is divided into eleven tehsils populated by 6,96,440 souls of which 72% are Hindus and 19% Muslims, the rest being miscellaneous groups (1961 Census). Since it is situated in the north-western part of the country, Kutch was influenced by most of the cultural currents that accompanied each wave of migration and invasion. Strong political, cultural, linguistic and racial influences from Sind are clearly visible in Kutch.

In addition to the Hindu castes, the population includes such Sind Rajputs as Jadeja, Samma and Sodha and Gujarat-Rajputs such as Chavda, Solanki, Vaghela and Gohils. Of the pastoral communities the Ahir, the Rabari, and the various *maidhari* communities of Banni (northern Kutch) are the

A detail of rasado of the Cheran community.



most colourful and rich in their material and artistic culture. There is a fair percentage of Charan population; they are traditional bards, genealogists and cattle breeders. The coastal areas are populated by various communities of Kharva, sailors. In addition to the semi-tribal *maladhari-s* there are such other Muslim communities as Memon, Miyana, Khoja, Bohra etc. A queer mixture of Hindu and Islamic beliefs and practices combined with local tradition lends a peculiar charm to the culture of Kutch.

The Shreyas Kutch Fair was attended by three hundred performers from the villages of Kutch. The most remarkable groups were the Ahir, Jat, Jadeja, Sidi and Koli.

The Ahir of the Patakiya sub-group from Joganinal (near Anjar) had sent a group of sixteen teenage boys to perform a *ras*. The boys wore intricately embroidered *kediyaun*(shirt), *vajani*(trousers) and *rumal*, a printed headpiece. The main feature of their dance was *panchakiya*, a five-fold movement. Each boy carried two small sticks in his hands and clapped these in the first and the fourth movement, to form a cross. In the second and the third movement both the sticks were clapped against those of the neighbour. In the fifth movement each boy turned a full circle on one foot and clapped a single stick with that of the neighbour. At each change of the movement, a step backward and forward was taken. The steps and movements were guided by the beat of the *tabla*.

Festive costume of Ahir boys.



A detail of the Jat dance.

A Jat group from Maivada in Kutch also performed a circle dance in which the drummer sat in the centre. Each step was alternately on the right or left side while proceeding forward. The hand movement consisted of raising each hand alternately skywards or groundwards with an occasional twist of the wrist.

Jadeja Rajputs performed a martial dance called *sindhudo* to the accompaniment of a drum. Two persons wearing a loose shirt, trousers and a turban and with their beard and moustache covered by *bukani*, a beard mask, danced with naked swords raised in the air. While dancing step-by-step, they came closer to each other, alternately raising their swords held in the right hand and carrying a miniature shield (made of leather and studded with mirror pieces) in the left hand. The climax of this movement was reached when one of the dancers suddenly raised his hand holding the shield towards the other, almost attacking the latter. At this point the second movement started in which the distance between the two participants increased as they danced backwards. A repetition of these actions forms the pattern of the *sindhudo* dance.

In Kutch there is a fair population of Sidi who are of African origin and who came along with the Portuguese and settled in Kutch and Saurashtra.



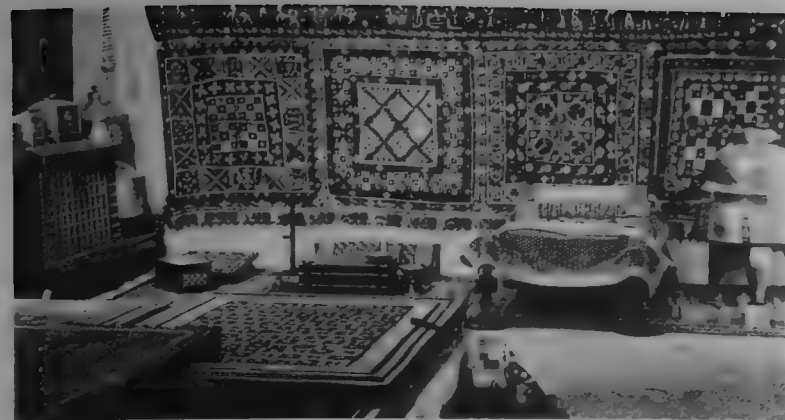
A Sidi drum player and a dancer.

They performed *dhamar*, a dance which is famous for its vigour. Each participant was dressed in semi-European clothes but had tied, unfailingly, the *rumal* on his head. Each dancer carried on a leather strap over his shoulder a small drum, partially wrapped in a green piece of cloth, and moved in a circle following an anti-clockwise pattern. When thoroughly involved, the participants looked as though they were in a trance. The drum of the Sidi is known as *mushira* and is made from coconut shell. During the dance, some of the participants carried a bunch of peacock feathers. In the original context the dance is performed on the festival days of their *pir* and is connected with spirit invocation.

The Koli of Lilpur Rapar in Kutch performed a circle dance in which some participants stood on their heads and while moving in a circle in the same position clapped their sticks with their legs which were stretched towards the sky.

A few *bhajanik* or singers of devotional songs also participated. They used the harmonium, manjira, tabla and tambura. Ramabai, a popular *bhajanik* and vocalist of Kutch, gave several performances. The *bhajanik* also recited *duha* or poetic couplets in praise of individuals or heroic or religious ideals.

The children of the school staged two interesting items from Kutch folklore: the story of Jesal-Toral which occupies a prominent place in the oral tradition of Kutch; and *Vrajanino dholi* which is a folk tale about a drummer who had the women of the Ahir community dance to the beat of his drum



Section of a Kathi house in the Shreyas Folk Museum

throughout the evening and night but was killed by the Ahir men out of jealousy.

On the occasion of the *mela*, the Shreyas Folk Museum was inaugurated. It is situated on the campus itself in the beautiful atmosphere of Shreyas Hill and in its exhibition halls are on display the various objects of the folk culture of Gujarat. Exquisite pieces of colourful embroidery, beadwork, applique work, wood-carvings, metal images and utensils, leather work, costumes, animal decorations, objects of household use and a few musical instruments from the villages of Gujarat are on show. Aspects of the culture of the Kathi, Rabari, Ahir, Charan, Bhavard, Kanbi, Koli, Mer Bhansali, Rajput, Brahmin, Vanla, Meghval, Khoja, Bohra, Memon, Miyana and other communities are represented in the Museum. Enlarged photographs and labels explain the context of use, name, location etc. of the objects. The collection, the thorough inventory and the photographic and textual documentation make the Museum a unique reference centre for the rural culture of Kutch and Saurashtra.

During the three-day fair of Kutch an exhibition of the finished handicraft products as well as a demonstration of various craft techniques was organised. Traditional techniques of manufacture of tie-dye textiles, hand-painted and block-printed cloths, woven woollen blankets, clay relief work were demonstrated by the craftsmen from the villages of Kutch.

The success of the fair was entirely due to the perceptive study and organisational capacity of Leena Mangaldas who has been arranging such fairs for two decades.

— JYOTINDRA JAIN

## Book Reviews

THE SOUND OF MUSIC IN RAJASTHAN by U. B. Mathur, The Music Lovers, Jaipur, 1976, Rs. 95.00 or \$12.00 (*In English*).

*The Sound of Music in Rajasthan* by U. B. Mathur has an opulent, rather impressive exterior, arousing expectations which are soon belied by its actual content. By contrast, a book in the same genre, Dr. Karan Singh's *Shadow and Sunlight, An Anthology of Dogra-Pahari Songs*, is less pretentious and without doubt far more useful.

In the case of the work under review, it is difficult to assess what kind of reader the author has in mind. The melodies are rendered in staff notation and the text accompanying them is in English. Without the Rajasthani text, it is impossible to judge the quality of the translation. In any case, words in English can never quite communicate the way sounds strike the ear when projected musically in the original tongue. Besides, notation can hardly convey the flavour of the original for in folk music it is texture which counts, with all its subtle variations. Moreover, the metronymic unit seems a little too fast for the rhythmic tempo of this kind of music. Admittedly, it is almost impossible to transpose the feel of folk songs in print. Perhaps a more viable method would have been to include tapes, communicating more faithfully the mode of the actual renderings. Granted that this is an expensive proposition but, in the ultimate analysis, it is a more effective method of indicating the mood of the original music.

The illustrations appear impressive but there is not much point in looking at instruments when one's main interest ought to be in hearing them being played. The pictures have an exotic touch which makes the book into a kind of musical equivalent of a travel book. The price, too, is forbiddingly high for an Indian student of music.

These comments are not intended to denigrate the effort that has gone into the book. It is a good starting point since any attempt to make our folk music accessible to a wide spectrum of listeners here and abroad needs to be warmly welcomed. But surely such rich lore deserves a more thorough, a more perceptive approach.

—VANRAJ BHATIA

BHARATA-NATYA-MANJARI by G. K. Bhat, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1975, Rs. 75.00 (*In English*).

Bharata's *Natyashastra* is an ocean of treatises connected with the stage. 'Stage', in its broader sense, includes everything that concerns aesthetics and craft; it is but a cross-section of life presented with the screen of one wall of the room demolished or taken off. Thus whatever is denied to us in actual life—to see, enjoy and learn—is manifested on the stage. Therefore, it is rightly qualified as a universe in miniature, reflected or represented. A thorough study of the *Natyashastra* provides the spectator with a kaleidoscopic view of life. This has also prompted an ardent student of the *Natyashastra*, Dr. G. K. Bhat, to make the laudable attempt to carve out from that great work a relevant and useful theme. *Bharata-Natya-Manjari* is thus a selection of the essential theoretical precepts of Bharata. Details concerning the theory and practice of Sanskrit drama have been carefully chosen and arranged topic-wise by the author. A new English translation has also been prepared by him to facilitate a first-hand study of the text material. Notes on technical and theoretical points have also been added, wherever necessary.

An exhaustive introduction, aiming at an elaborate critical study of the various topics dealt with in the *Natyashastra*, is an additional attraction. It contains three sections. Section One deals with Bharata and the *Natyashastra* and handles problems connected with the text of the *Natyashastra*, its various rescensions, their authenticity, the dates ascribed to this great work, the authorship and finally the contents of the treatise, chapter by chapter. Section Two is devoted to a detailed study of dramatic theory. Beginning with the problem of the origin of *Natya*, the author discusses all the relevant aspects of the theory of drama dealt with in the *Natyashastra*. He gives a not-too-detailed, but convincing, interpretation of Bharata's concept of *Natya*. What Bharata means by 'imitation' has been well explained in the context of art. The fact that the literary critics of the West have also later defined art as an imitation of nature or life, is referred to by the author in his attempt to give a suitable interpretation of the term 'imitation' (*anukrti*) used by Bharata. The author then proceeds to explain the terms *Bhava*, *Abhinaya* and *Rupaka*. This section concludes with the delineation of topics such as composing a drama, language and dialogue, aspects of presentation and finally includes one entitled 'Towards Beauty and Pleasure'. The third section is the most important aspect of the study. 'Drama in Production' is dealt with here. A detailed account of the three types of play-houses, with diagrams, is given under the sub-title 'Theatre and Stage'. The use of terms like *ranga-shirsa*, and *rangapitha* has received excellent treatment in the hands of the learned author. He has spared no pains to quote relevant authorities and their controversial statements to bring home the rationale behind his own conclusion. This discussion is followed by studies on *Purvaranga*, *Abhinaya*, on Production Techniques and Performance Values, all of which receive very careful attention from the author.

The text proper is prefaced by a few plates showing different *chari-s*, *sthana-s*, *hasta-s* and *abhinaya-s*. Perhaps this portion of the publication



alone is inadequately and unsatisfactorily presented and represented. Simple diagrams would have served the purpose better.

The text proper, a compendium of selected topics from the *Natya-shastra* (with the English translation printed opposite), should certainly help any student of this ancient treatise to study it from the original source. Ten topics have been chosen, and they cover the subject matter dealt with in the critical introduction.

*Bharata-Natya-Manjari* is recommended as a useful reference work to students of Indian dramaturgy. The work affords ample scope for a serious researcher to probe more deeply into the science of histrionics. It is interesting to learn from Prof. R. N. Dandekar's Foreword that Dr. Bhat "as a dramatist, actor and producer had also had occasions to relate Bharata's work to the modern theory and technique of drama". This is as it should be for it only proves that theoretical knowledge is perfected only through practical experience.

—S. K. NAYAR

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FOLKLORE OF BENGAL—A PROJECTED STUDY by Sankar Sen Gupta, Indian Publications, Calcutta, 1976, Rs. 52.00 (*In English*).

Shri Sankar Sen Gupta is considered to be a reputed author in the field of Indian folklore and this could perhaps be because he has written more about folklore in English, rather than in any Indian language. He is without doubt hardworking and tenacious. He has been publishing a periodical, *Folklore*, for over a decade. Even so, where research in folklore is concerned Sankar Sen Gupta's achievement falls short of expectation. In spite of the numerous books that he has produced on folklore (in addition to the several articles in *Folklore* itself), he does not have that thoroughness of methodology required of a research scholar. His articles and books tend to be repetitive and they are not even informative in the true sense of the term. He seems to lack a deep insight into the subject of folklore, has little analytical ability and hence his writings have limited research value.

The present book is no exception to the usual style of writing adopted by the author. Though the title of the book is *Folklore of Bengal*, the author often wanders away from the subject of Bengali folklore, its specific characteristics, history, and cultural significance. Rather he evades the topical bearings of the subject and in doing so changes the very nature of the subject he claims to cover.

The author dwells at length on folklore in general and not on Bengali folklore alone. Bengali folklore serves more as an illustration and is intro-

duced sometimes without the right kind of context. A chapter-by-chapter analysis will indicate that the author offers no substantial account of Bengal's folklore.

The first chapter, *Land and the People*, has little bearing on the subject. It includes some sketchy historical notes and information on the population and castes of Bengal and Bangla Desh. The author has barely brought out the salient features of the historical, geographical, and even political background of Bengali folklore. The whole chapter reads more like a diminutive version of a census report. The historical and ethnic material on the subject is plentiful and has been ably tackled by scholars in Bengal, both in English and Bengali. But Sankar Sen Gupta has not handled the material with the rigour it deserves.

The same is true of the second chapter, *Myth and Mythology*. The author explains what a myth is but his illustrations of Bengali myths are not copious. Since he does not explore in depth the genre of the Indian myth, he cannot enlighten us on the subject of Bengal's contribution to this important field of study. He does not make a distinction between myth, legend and belief. Instead of a lucid and fairly representative account of Bengali myths, what emerges is a score of disjointed illustrations: on the sun and the moon, spirits, water, *durba*-grass, the breasts and *bel*, Manik Pir, sneezing, the reasons for Kartick's bachelorhood, etc.

The third chapter, *Language and Dialects*, is almost redundant.

In the fourth chapter, *Folk Religion, Magic and Cults*, the author elaborates on the already well-defined concepts of spiritism, *mana*, magic etc. But later on, he gives a fairly good account of local cults, both of the Hindus and Muslims. But he has not shown the links between certain deities and their inter-changeable roles. The information he provides about ghosts, *bhut*-s and *rakshasa*-s is also fairly general.

In the chapter, *Customs and Traditions*, while describing ceremonial friendships, the author does not refer to those found outside Bengal, for instance in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa.

In the same chapter, in his description of the puberty rites in rural Bengal the author uses an expression, 'the Hindu folk women of Bengal'. It sounds rather odd, and a better alternative should have been found. What has modern love-marriage or divorce to do with folk traditions? But even this addition can perhaps be understood since the author intends to discuss the marriage customs of Bengal. But how does 'crime and criminals' come to be included in a chapter on customs and traditions? Obviously the author has thought it fit to bring in any topic that can be considered to have some sociological relevance. But whether it comes within the span of folklore or not seems to count for little.

The chapter, *Fairs and Festivals*, is an exception. It does justice to the subject matter. But there, too, the information is descriptive, with no attempt to trace the sources and the inter-linking of rites and rituals.

In the chapter, *Culture and Communications*, the author states that *Pantha-bhat* (stale boiled rice soaked overnight in water) is a popular dish in Bengal. But what he does not tell is that this type of rice is eaten almost all over India, especially in Bihar, Orissa, Western Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu etc. The author has failed to draw comparisons with conventions prevalent outside Bengal. Folk-songs, fairy tales, folk-tales, proverbs, and riddles have not been related to the rites and customs connected with them. The book falls short of offering us a coherent and exhaustive picture of the folklore of Bengal.

—DURGA BHAGVAT

## Record Reviews

YUNUS MALIK: Ghazals. Evening Blues.  
HMV S/7LPE 4028 (Stereo).

DILRAJ KAUR: Ghazals. Super Ghazals on Super Seven.  
HMV S/7LPE 4027 (Stereo).

RANG-E-GHAZAL SHAM-E-GHAZAL. Side One: Ahmadi Begum Chopra and others. Side Two: Talat Mahmood, Mukesh and others.  
HMV EMGE 12507.

The *ghazal* has now attained a definite stature as a form of non-classical music with a firm popular and musical base. It has travelled a long way from the stage of being a mere poetic recitation and has become a well-composed song where composers introduce intricate *raga* and *tala* themes in their tunes.

Yunus Malik and Dilraj Kaur both represent this stage in the development of the form. Yunus Malik's *Yun Unki Mast Nigahon Ka Ehteram Kiya* is sung in a well-controlled tempo, faster than that usually associated with *ghazal* singing. *Masti Men Jab Apna Sar Jhuka Doon* is sung in a *tala* of eleven *matra*-s. His singing is natural, but he does not exploit to the full the melodic quality of his voice. With lesser use of the intervening orchestrated music he might perhaps be able to achieve this—though with Mehdi Hassan's *ghazal* ruling over the Indo-Pak sub-continent, the proposition seems difficult.

Dilraj Kaur's performance confirms the tendency towards a tightly composed *ghazal*. With bansuri, harmonium, sarangi and guitar-strumming, all laced in with the utmost musical deliberation, her *ghazal*-singing gives an experience of well-executed musical intentions. But surely one longs for a greater touch of improvisation. Against this background her singing impresses the listener because of her clearly articulated voice and confidently rendered tonal intricacies of tempi and arrangement of sharp-flat notes. Besides, there are those flavours of *raga*-s like Todi, Bhairavi etc. *Bin Tere Mujhko Nazarone Pareshan Kiya* is a good illustration of her abilities.

This mixed bouquet of *ghazal*-s sung by various artistes provides a study in contrast. Singers like Ahmadi Begum Chopra, Nirmala Devi, Malika Pukhraj on the one hand and Begum Akhtar, Talat Mahmood, Mukesh on the other, certainly represent a more classically-oriented style of *ghazal*-singing. Specially noteworthy in this respect is the scope of improvisation, the typical voice-projection and the use of conventions like *dugan* (tempo in double) at the end of a stanza etc.

Ahmadi Begum Chopra's *Aaj Meri Shab-e-Furqat* reminds one of Begum Akhtar's *thumri*-oriented *ghazal*; Nirmala Devi's use at the start of the *tanpura*, of a tune set in the *raga* Chandrakauns, and of fast passages of the Patiala *gharana* illustrate the classical base of the *ghazal*.

Malika Pukhraj's *Zahid Na Kah Bura* is more of an expressive recitation rather than a musical rendering: it is really a specimen of an earlier era and to my mind its inclusion here is to some extent anachronistic.

*Josh-e-Giriya Se Yeh Ankhen* and *Sab Kahan Kuchh Lala-o-Gul Men* are sung by Talat Mahmood and Mukesh as duets. Voice-wise, Talat Mahmood's tremulous crooning and Mukesh's slightly nasalized tone form an interesting combination. Unfortunately, tune-wise, the combination is not well-exploited.

Mehdi Hassan's pieces immediately strike a note of fresh authenticity. His use of bass and a sort of 'humming' projection of voice along with a relaxed tempo are evidence of a rare musical poise and a contemplative attitude towards music. The active following he enjoys in India is a clear indication of the unique impact he has made in the world of *ghazal*.

—ASHOK RANADE

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—Editor.

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## NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021.

### SOME FORTHCOMING EVENTS

| Programme   | Date                      | Venue  |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| 1. MITTI KI GADI—A Hindi play (Naya Theatre, New Delhi). Directed by Habib Tanvir. (Co-sponsored with the Indian National Theatre.)   | 8/12/77<br>and<br>9/12/77 | Bhulabhai Desai Auditorium                     |
| 2. KATHAKALI— <i>Dr. Faust</i>  | 17/12/77                  | Tata Institute of Fundamental Research Gardens |
| 3. EAST AND WEST<br>A programme featuring Pandit Ram Narayan (Sarangi) and the Bombay Chamber Orchestra, conductor Joachim Buhler. This programme includes the first performance of a work for sarangi and string orchestra by Peter Michael Hamel. | 15/1/78                   | Homi Bhabha Auditorium                         |
| 4. The STUTTGART TRIO<br>(In collaboration with the Max Mueller Bhavan).  | 8/2/78                    | Patkar Hall                                    |
| 5. The SYDNEY STRING QUARTET  | 21/2/78                   | Homi Bhabha Auditorium                         |